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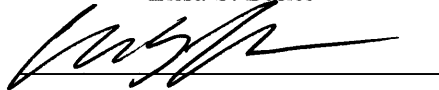
ENRICHING THE CROSS-CULTURAL EXPERIENCE
AT THE BANGKOK PROJECT CENTER

THROUGH PREPARATION AND ACTIVE INVOLVEMENT WITH CHULALONGKORN UNIVERSITY

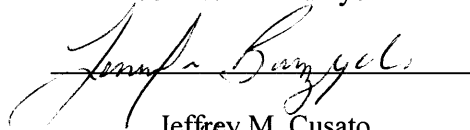
An Interactive Qualifying Project
Submitted to the Faculty of
Worcester Polytechnic Institute
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the
Degree of Bachelor of Science

~ by ~

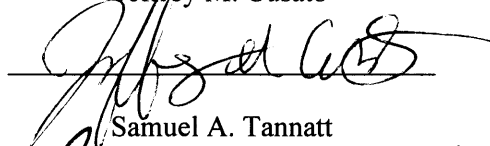
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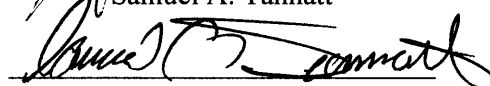
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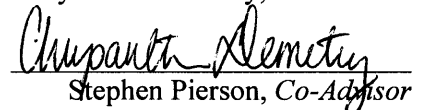


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~ Date: February 27th, 2001 ~

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ABSTRACT

This project proposed actions to be taken by Worcester Polytechnic Institute and Chulalongkorn University to enhance the cultural impact of the Bangkok Project Center. Working from literature and interviews with stakeholders, we ascertained ways to culturally enrich those involved with the BPC. Our results showed that, while many things are done well during the BPC preparation courses, there is room for improvement. Also, there is evidence of support for more interaction between WPI and CU. We made recommendations for enhancements to the BPC preparatory courses and suggested avenues to pursue for a closer WPI-CU relationship.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

For twelve years now, Worcester Polytechnic Institute (WPI) has been sending students abroad to Bangkok, Thailand where they complete their Interactive Qualifying Projects (IQP). As one of WPI's most exotic project centers, the Bangkok IQPs typically appeal to adventurous students who are interested in immersing themselves in a completely new culture. Many are looking for a change from life in Worcester Massachusetts, located in the middle of New England. Upon arrival to Bangkok, some students are wide-eyed and amazed at everything, other's find it to be not so different after all. Either way, all the students are presented with a culturally enriching experience they will likely remember for the rest of their lives.

Before coming to Bangkok, WPI students engage in a fourteen-week preparation course, which consists of a Thai language/culture class as well as instruction in the basics of writing an IQP. Here they are first introduced to the rudiments of the Thai language and receive tips about the culture they will experience. They also read books related to Thailand that must then be related to their project in some way to demonstrate comprehension of the subject matter. The hopes of the project center administrators is that by providing the students with some background information prior to their arrival in Thailand, they will not be as overwhelmed by new stimulus.

The project center is based out of Chulalongkorn University (CU), one of Thailand's premier universities. Students are able to use the academic facilities, many have liaisons associated with the school, and a few even work directly with the CU students. The students' presence on campus allows for opportunities for interaction with Thai students that may enhance the cultural experience that the WPI students receive in Thailand. It would also give

the Thai students a chance to see what Americans are actually like, and see how they compare to stereotypes learned from reading, television, and movies.

The goal of our project was to present the Interdisciplinary Global Studies Division (IGSD) of WPI and the Office of International Affairs (OIA) of CU with a set of recommendations that would make time spent at the Bangkok Project Center a more culturally enriching experience for the students of both universities. In order to achieve this goal, it was necessary to speak with members or representatives of those groups that would most likely be affected by such recommendations; the WPI Bangkok Project Center participants and the CU students and faculty. Such interviews were performed so that we could determine the most beneficial way to expand cross-cultural interaction for all parties involved. Having spoken with several members or representatives of these groups, the data obtained was analyzed and common themes or suggestions extracted, which were presented to the WPI and CU international project planners. We also proposed several recommendations for future research or projects that could continue the findings that were gathered this term.

Because our recommendations sought to suggest programs and activities that would be of benefit to both WPI students and CU students, it was also necessary to determine those activities and programs in which the CU students would be interested. Professors, primarily from the Faculty of Art's English Department, were also consulted in order to determine if such interaction could be helpful academically for the students of their classes, while the administrators represented the interests of the school as a whole in such interaction. A general idea of the interest amongst the students was also ascertained through speaking with the CU students and faculty. Speaking with WPI students revealed that they too were interested in interaction between Chulalongkorn University (CU) students and WPI students. They were excited with the potential of meeting CU students who could serve as their guides

and friends, allowing them to truly experience Thai culture. CU student representatives reciprocated a desire for interaction emphasizing that many Thais would be interested in learning about American culture through us.

In order to determine possible ways in which the cross-cultural experience at the Bangkok Project Center could be improved, it was necessary to get feedback on the preparation process that the Bangkok IQP participants of 2001 recently underwent. WPI students were questioned about the effectiveness of their pre-Bangkok cultural classes so that, in the future, WPI might be able to send more culturally aware students to Thailand who would be more capable of interacting with the CU students while also getting more from the Bangkok experience. They were also questioned about their desire for interaction with CU students, whether they had any suggestions of ways to increase the level of interaction. It was determined that the most appropriate way of gathering this type of information was through interviews, and it became clear through research that the benefits of using focus group interviews greatly outweighed the disadvantages. Most of the groups of students we spoke with in interview groups had relatively similar cultural backgrounds, although two groups contained members whose backgrounds in Thai culture contributed additional depth and relevance to the data gathered.

Some of the findings from the interviews are that the WPI students for the most part agreed that the preparation courses required by WPI gave them general knowledge and insight that greatly eased their transition into Thai society. For instance, the greeting words and Thai numbers were both used quite frequently in day-to-day transactions. There was also a lot of interest expressed in learning more about the culture of Thailand. One of the positive results of the knowledge gained in the preparation courses was that making an effort to speak Thai, rather than expecting those around them to speak English, helped them gain the respect of people that they encountered. A basic understanding of the language and the culture of

Thailand provided the Bangkok Project Center participants with a sense of security and understanding that helped whet their appetites for exploring Bangkok and its wealth of culture.

Some of our recommendations for future work include ways to increase the effectiveness of the preparation courses to increase the WPI project center participants' cultural experience. We also recommend ways to pursue the interaction between CU and WPI. One of the suggestions was to look into holding a Thai language class in Bangkok for the students, as many of them expressed a desire to learn more of the language in a setting where they would be able to go out and practice it right away. Based on our interview results, it was also recommended that the focus of the language class in Worcester be shifted slightly to include more practical phrases such as taxi directions and bargaining words. In order to further the interaction between WPI and CU, a social approach is recommended, starting out with an email pen pal program, and continuing it in Bangkok with social events such as a soccer match, or a welcome to Thailand BBQ.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We, Elisa S. Baker, Jennifer M. Burzycki, Jeffrey M. Cusato and Samuel A. Tannatt, gratefully acknowledge:

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Dr. Jirdsak Tscheikuna and Dr. Sutha Khaodhiar for their tireless effort to set up interviews with esteemed members of the Chulalongkorn administration, faculty and student body. Our results would have been terribly one-sided had it not been for them. Their dedication to our project is indicative of their devotion to closer ties between WPI and CU.

Stephen J. Weininger whose outlook for the Bangkok Project Center provided us with the inspiration for our new project.

‘A’ ‘Niη’ and ‘Noonη’ whose help on our first project was invaluable, and whose friendship was unwavering. They truly enriched our cultural experience in Thailand – introduced us to other CU students, showed us around Bangkok, made us eat strange Thai foods, taught us useful Thai phrases and answered our many questions with the patience of a school teacher. They also posed questions about life in America that made us ponder our usual lives from a different perspective. Their friendship was ultimately what convinced us of the validity of our new project.

Wes Jamison and Aacaan Sumalee whose preparation courses for the IQP in Bangkok truly made us ready for the work in and experience of Thailand.

The Bangkok Project Center participants of 2001! Your cooperation with us on our new project not only allowed for its completion, but has also guaranteed even better preparation for the subsequent Bangkok participants. Your companionship made this project center the life-changing experience that was for all of us. We hope that we instilled in you the same sense of security and support that you provided us. Thank you all for your friendship – it will never be forgotten.

The lady across the street for menus written in phassa Ankrit, for always smiling and, of course, for sustenance. ☺

Bobby Raja for the beautiful suits, the ego-enriching conversations and the numerous free imbibeables. 🍷

Thank you all for everything.

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AUTHORSHIP PAGE

ABSTRACT..... ESB

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY ESB

AUTHORSHIP PAGE..... ESB/JMB/JMC/SAT

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION SAT

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW..... ESB/JMB/JMC/SAT

ESB wrote and researched much of the 3rd section on cultural barriers. JMB wrote the section about Chulalongkorn University and contributed model programs for the cultural section. JMC contributed most of the research and drew up outlines and several paragraphs for sections on WPI and CU. SAT wrote the section about WPI and contributed model programs for the cultural section.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY..... ESB/JMB/SAT

ESB researched the advantages/disadvantages of data gathering techniques and wrote the analysis section. JMB and SAT wrote the sections pertaining to the reasons for selecting the stakeholder groups and the methods of data gathering employed.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS AND ANALYSIS..... ESB/JMB/JMC/SAT

Together we examined the results, drew conclusions and made up an outline. Everyone wrote extensively on this section, ESB and JMB about WPI feedback and JMC and SAT about interaction. SAT revised and restructured the section to its current form.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS JMB

APPENDIX A: CU INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTS CONDUCTED BY: JMC/SAT

INTERVIEW NUMBER 1..... SAT

INTERVIEW NUMBER 2..... JMC

INTERVIEW NUMBER 3..... JMC

INTERVIEW NUMBER 4..... JMC

APPENDIX B: CU INTERVIEW CONTENT ANALYSIS JMC

APPENDIX C: WPI FOCUS GROUP TRANSCRIPTS.....CONDUCTED BY: ESB/JMB

INTERVIEW 1.....ESB

INTERVIEW 2.....ESB

INTERVIEW 3.....ESB

INTERVIEW 4.....JMB

INTERVIEW 5.....ESB

INTERVIEW 6.....JMB

INTERVIEW 7.....JMB

APPENDIX D: WPI FOCUS GROUP CONTENT ANALYSISESB/JMB

* Everyone contributed to ameliorating problems with this document through proofreading, suggestions and revisions.

* This authorship page is not necessarily an accurate account of what everyone has put into this IQP, for a change in project nullified too many contributions to be mentioned here

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

The Bangkok Project Center (BPC) has been exposing Worcester Polytechnic Institute (WPI) students to a vastly different culture for over a decade. In 1989, two Thai students who had returned home for their summer vacation conducted the first official Interactive Qualifying Project (IQP) in Thailand,¹ and groups of WPI students have been coming half way around the world ever since. Through the IQP, WPI seeks to expose their students to the effects of their technology on society, to make their students aware of other cultures in this increasingly global economy, and to present their students with problems that require interaction and thought.² The university seeks to produce leaders,³ and leaders must be able to communicate with others, consider thoughts and ideas that they may not have had previous exposure to, and apply their own intuition to make informed and thoughtful decisions. The Bangkok Project Center, anchored on the campus of Chulalongkorn University (CU) in downtown Bangkok, presents WPI students with real problems whose solutions effect real people. Truly, the Bangkok Project Center is unique in the scope of its projects and the opportunities for exposure to a different culture, different lifestyle, and different train of thought.

Among all of the off-campus project centers offered by WPI, Bangkok is the one that provides the most intense, different cross-cultural experience and so it is no surprise that such a sudden entrance to a different culture has proved daunting to many BPC participants. WPI touts the project center as a place where students have “incomparable opportunities to investigate the rapidly growing technologies and economies of Asia... [and] to encounter

¹ Stephen J. Weininger. Director, Bangkok Project Center

² WPI Undergraduate Catalog 2000-2001. p20.

³ *ibid.* p3.

Thai culture.”⁴ This is notable because Thai culture is truly quite different from anything to be found in the United States. People speak a language that is in no way similar to any of the European languages taught to the students in high school and college. The *mai pen rai* pace of life differs greatly from the highly structured and scheduled pace found in the United States. Even the religion, which affects many other aspects of Thai life, is something to which most students do not have exposure to prior to their arrival in Thailand. Certainly such differences are enough to make any visitor feel uncomfortable and reluctant to go out and explore life on the other side of the globe. For years, these problems went more-or-less unaddressed because the preparations for Bangkok were the sole responsibility of each year’s BPC advisors, and so there was little roll-over and the preparations were relatively unstructured.⁵

Recently, however, efforts have been made to improve the preparation process for Bangkok-bound students so that their transition into life in Thailand is smoother. Stephen J. Weininger was appointed as the Director of the BPC in 1996, and, two years later, the size of the Bangkok-bound class doubled from fifteen to thirty students. The increased class size coupled with the aspirations of the recently appointed project director carried with it enough momentum to reconsider the preparation process. Thoughts about ways to overcome the barriers that hindered the cultural enrichment of Bangkok-bound students began to emerge, and, in 1999, the recently accepted Bangkok participants were given a taste of the Project Center’s first structured preparation program.⁶ The preparation program, which has now been in place for several years, requires that all Bangkok-bound students successfully

⁴ WPI Undergraduate Catalog 2000-2001. p48.

⁵ Stephen J. Weininger, Bangkok Project Center Director

⁶ *ibid*

complete a Thai language and culture course in addition to an abbreviated ID2050⁷ course. The Thai language and culture class teaches students basic phrases and cultural differences that will help them communicate basic needs and give them an idea of the significance of the happenings around them. In addition, the required reading for ID2050 has been tailored to the needs of Bangkok-bound students, dealing to a greater extent with the culture and history of Thailand. Handouts explaining interviewing and analysis techniques, material usually encompassed by the required reading of ID2050 classes for other project centers, supplement this cultural reading. In doing so, students still learn about proper techniques required of their project while, at the same time, preparing themselves for a different way of life on the eastern shore of the Pacific.

Displaying the typical “it can always be improved” attitude that emanates from much of the WPI campus, WPI has set its eyes again on further enhancing the cultural experience yielded by the BPC through interaction between WPI and CU students. Influential members of CU are also interested in challenging the status quo in hopes of increasing the cross-cultural interaction of their students and in turn fostering a closer relationship between the two universities, both socially and academically.⁸ Yet, despite all of the desire for closer a relationship, little has been done to further the relationship. In fact, in the last ten years, only two attempts have been made to further inter-university relations. In March of 1992, WPI and CU entered into an official academic partnership, however, seminars and lectures are all that have been shared between the two universities aside from the IQP residence.⁹ When compared with the exchange programs and project cooperation that exist between CU and

⁷ ID2050 is a WPI class that is standard preparation for all students bound for overseas project centers. It teaches skills required for the successful completion of the IQP such as proper ethnographic practices, public speaking and professional report presentation and format.

⁸ Dr. Jirdsak Tscheikuna

⁹ http://www.chula.ac.th/international/index_en.html – select United States, then WPI

many European and Asian universities,¹⁰ the relationship with WPI is in its first stages, still far from being as involved with CU as other universities. While the first attempt at project interaction involving both WPI and CU students was not successful academically, what did surface from this interaction was that the students of both schools were genuinely interested in spending time with and getting to know each other. Important officials at both universities see this type of social interaction between the students as first step in constructing successful programs of academic cooperation. What the administrators from both institutions lack is a specific course of action to foster closer social relationships between their students.

The goal of this project was to compile a set of recommendations to be presented to the Interdisciplinary & Global Studies Division (IGSD) of WPI and the Office of International Affairs at CU to enrich the cross-cultural experience of both WPI and CU students while fostering a closer relationship, both academic and social, between the two universities. The recommendations were drawn up based on suggestions taken from the series of focus groups and interviews that were conducted with WPI students, CU students and CU professors. Our propositions, both about enriching the cultural experience yielded by the Bangkok preparation courses and about furthering the WPI-CU relationship, were submitted to the project planners of both institutions in hopes that they might be of some use to the prime movers. These recommendations provide valuable information for achieving that vision of close social and academic interaction, which both WPI and CU are currently seeking.

¹⁰ http://www.chula.ac.th/international/index_en.html – select country

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

The goal of our project was to present the Interdisciplinary Global Studies Division (IGSD) of Worcester Polytechnic Institute (WPI) and the Office of International Affairs (OIA) of Chulalongkorn University (CU) with a set of recommendations that would make time spent at the Bangkok Project Center a more culturally enriching experience for the students of both universities. In order to prepare our recommendations for methods of cultural enhancement, it was imperative to understand first the philosophies and educational styles of both institutions. WPI presents a unique approach to education through its WPI Plan, the likes of which exist nowhere else in the world. CU also takes a distinctive approach from the traditional approaches found throughout Thailand and the rest of the world. Aside from an understanding of the manner in which the two universities function, comprehension of the effects of a different culture on a person and the ways in which cultural understanding and assimilation can be attained was necessary in order for us to formulate suitable conclusions.

2.1 EDUCATION AT WORCESTER POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE – THE WPI PLAN

WPI prides itself on the unique opportunities that its education offers. From the day of its founding, WPI has worked to combine traditional classroom instruction with practical application. This educational tradition, known as the “Two Towers” tradition, is aimed at preparing graduates for real world situations by giving them both the knowledge they need and the skills to use it. The current educational program, the WPI Plan (hereafter referred to as “The Plan”), was adopted by the faculty of WPI in 1970, replacing the previous, more inflexible approach to education.¹¹ By incorporating projects in which students are faced

¹¹ WPI Undergraduate Catalog 2000-2001. p5.

with real-world problems, The Plan stresses the importance of teaching WPI's students to learn through a hands-on approach to their education. This involved approach permeates through all levels of the education from labs that supplement lectures, right down to the schedule which is very flexible due to the small number of mandatory courses.

The Plan set up a unique scheduling system whereby classes are offered in four seven-week terms during the academic year, as opposed to the semester terms utilized by most universities.¹² The curriculum is intense due to the fact that a semester's worth of material is taught in only seven weeks. However, because students only take three classes per term, then can focus on what they are learning rather than being spread thin between five or six classes at a time. This approach allows for students to gain a broad scope of knowledge and examine their interests in various subjects. This approach is aimed at producing students with a strong base of knowledge who have majored in a field that they truly enjoy.¹³ The flexibility of the schedule also allows students to weave their own path to their graduation, giving them a chance to discover their interests for themselves, rather than being forced to follow a road that has been laid before them. This experimentation and fostering of independence and responsibility is something that WPI is proud to instill in its students.

Another facet of The Plan, which is directly related to the untraditional schedule, is the emphasis on project work. There are three major projects required for graduation that the developers of The Plan wanted to be a major part of the learning process at WPI. To ensure that students were able to devote enough time to these projects they divided the year into four terms so that rather than having the project be one out of five simultaneous activities, it is only one out of three. These three major projects are: the Sufficiency, the Interactive Qualifying Project (IQP), and the Major Qualifying Project (MQP).¹⁴ The Sufficiency

¹² WPI Undergraduate Catalog 2000-2001. p20.

¹³ WPI Undergraduate Catalog 2000-2001. p5.

¹⁴ WPI Undergraduate Catalog 2000-2001. p4.

program is a means of assuring that WPI turns out graduates that are multi-faceted people. For engineering majors, the Sufficiency, which is often completed during the sophomore year, involves two full units (or a half-year's work) of courses taken in a chosen theme of arts or humanities classes, including a capstone project. This project is an independent study which must draw upon the knowledge learned as well as explore new territory, and can be a research paper or performance. For humanities majors, the topic must be engineering or science. The students are free to choose the topic of their paper, the advisor and the year during which it is completed, with the stipulation that the paper must tie together themes presented in their five required humanities classes (or engineering classes for a humanities major).¹⁵

The IQP, which is usually completed during the junior year, is a truly unique program aimed at exposing WPI students to technology in the context of its effect on humanity.¹⁶ Many IQP project centers exist around the world, which provides students doing an IQP abroad an opportunity to see how technology may have different affects on people belonging to a culture unlike their own. The third and final project in The Plan is the MQP, which is traditionally completed during a student's senior year. This project addresses problems that are typical of that student's major.¹⁷ These two qualifying projects serve to prepare the students for situations they are likely to encounter in the real world.

Together, the projects, courses and scheduling make up a very unique approach to undergraduate education that is aimed at "helping students learn how to learn".¹⁸ Many engineering universities seek to create the stereotypical engineer, head bursting at the seams with information. WPI challenges itself to produce conscientious, creative and adaptable

¹⁵ WPI Undergraduate Catalog 2000-2001. p51.

¹⁶ WPI Undergraduate Catalog 2000-2001. p37.

¹⁷ WPI Undergraduate Catalog 2000-2001. p36.

¹⁸ WPI Undergraduate Catalog 2000-2001. p5.

young men and women – As Dr. Jirdsak insightfully puts it WPI seeks to “produce humans”.¹⁹

2.2 EDUCATION AT CHULALONGKORN UNIVERSITY

Chulalongkorn University was the first institution of higher learning to be established in Thailand. Throughout Thailand’s rapid advancements, the university has managed to keep up, striving to meet the needs of its growing student population by providing ever increasing fields of study and by actively seeking interaction with universities of different countries. Their mission of instilling in their students an understanding of the world and a respect for other cultures and ideas therefore dictates their mixing with members of other societies.

Chulalongkorn is committed to constantly improving the quality and variety of academics and activities offered to the student body as it has grown in size to a current population of approximately 25,000 students.²⁰ Presently there are over 11,000 courses to select from in their curriculum. Along with CU’s commitment to the improvement of the development of educational resources made available to its students, CU’s mission statement asserts that it is also devoted to improving its students, both in scholarship and the ways in which they conduct themselves as individuals and members of society. They strive not only to provide a competitive education to their students, but also a sense of morals, responsibility and self-reliance.²¹ The university provides its students with many different opportunities in hopes of making their graduates into well-rounded individuals.

According to the Office of International Affairs (OIA), in order to maintain its commitment to enhance the opportunities made available to its students, CU has formed connections with international educational institutions to provide the students with exposure

¹⁹ Dr. Jirdsak Tscheikuna, 02/16/2001

²⁰ http://www.chula.ac.th/about/general_en.html

²¹ http://www.chula.ac.th/about/mission_en.html

to other cultures. At the same time, this exposes the students of other institutions to Thai edification. To date, CU has collaborative interactions with 101 universities and institutes, 55 organizations, and student and faculty exchange programs with 189 universities and institutes and is seeking to coordinate additional connections.²²

Due to the growing interest in international interactions and exchange programs, the Office of International Affairs at CU has made it their goal to develop connections between CU and universities and organizations from around the world.²³ They strive to implement programs that emphasize international interactions through academic exchanges and mutually beneficial relationships with international institutions. The OIA's role also serves to ready students and faculty for their experiences abroad by preparing them to communicate on an international level. Furthermore, they are involved with the international students studying at CU. They organize cultural and social activities for international exchange students as well as make sure their well being is being taken care of and they are provided with information and assistance. A special ceremony called "Wrist-Binding" takes place annually to welcome overseas students in a traditional Thai manner. Certainly, CU is dedicated to furthering the role of international interaction in the everyday lives of their students.

2.3 EFFECTS OF DIFFERENT CULTURES & METHODS FOR INTERACTION

Due to the enormous differences in culture around the world, many students are able to have very rewarding experiences when studying abroad as they learn to acclimate themselves to a foreign surrounding. However, there are obstacles that must be overcome in order for opportunities for personal growth and development to arise. Some of the difficulties faced by these adventurous sojourners could be reduced by appropriate preparation and understanding of the culture to be entered. Substantial obstacles often

²² http://www.chula.ac.th/international/index_en.html

²³ http://www.chula.ac.th/international/index_en.html

encountered by travelers are language barriers and different ideas about appropriate behavior. There are healthy and unhealthy ways of dealing with cultural change, and several methods of direct social interaction are advocated for helping people, students in particular, adapt to the new culture of a country and make their experience more culturally enriching.

Living or working in a foreign culture can be extremely challenging because one is confronted with new problems and new mindsets, all of which make adaptation more difficult.²⁴ Living in an unfamiliar culture can have serious ramifications, which are dependant on things such as age, previous experience, role in the new setting, and the experiences during the first few days or weeks in the new setting. Once the initial euphoria of being in a new locale has worn off and reality sets in, it becomes apparent how well the adaptation is proceeding. If the acclimatization is not going well, irritability, impatience, depression, lack of appetite, and other various other symptoms manifest themselves in what is often referred to as culture shock.²⁵ If dissatisfaction becomes too high, job performance may be affected, and the overall enjoyment of a new culture will be lessened.

While there are many ideas about how one can best adapt to a new culture, most ideas fall into one of two main schools of thought. It is argued by some that no training or preparation whatsoever can prepare a person for life in another country; that only by experiencing the demands can he learn to cope with them.²⁶ However, others argue that by understanding a culture and the reasons behind why members of the culture act the way they do will leave a traveler much better able to deal with tough situations when they do arise.²⁷ This can prevent some of the unpleasantness that may arise for a visitor, such as increased

²⁴ Guthrie, George M. "Learning to Live in an Alien Society." Chapter Included by: Richard Brislin and Stephen Buckner and Walter Lonner ed. Cross-Cultural Perspectives on Learning. New York: Sage Publications, 1975. p96.

²⁵ *ibid.* pp97-98.

²⁶ Who says this????

²⁷ Triandis, Jeffrey. "Culture Training, Cognitive Complexity and Interpersonal Attitudes." Chapter Included by: Richard Brislin and Stephen Buckner and Walter Lonner ed. Cross-Cultural Perspectives on Learning. New York: Sage Publications, 1975. pp41-43.

self-consciousness and anxiety due to what appears to be unpredictable behavior. The self-consciousness arises partly from being stared at and partly from continual vigilance to try to prevent social errors from happening.

If one wants to fully understand another culture, obviously language is of central importance, but there are other considerations such as non-verbal communication and different values and modes of behavior. These differences are especially hard to identify, because they are learned through imitation from a young age and are not verbalized very much. In addition, violations of values may not be interpreted as a lack of understanding, as a mispronounced word would be, but rather as moral or ethical shortcomings. A visitor may quickly find that he is met with disapproval for reasons that he does not understand and that he fails to please with strategies that have always worked at home.

The appropriate and effective way to learn new behaviors is through observation and imitation.²⁸ Once a person sees someone do something that is successful or positively reinforced, that person will strive do something similar. For this reason the first few weeks are the most influential in setting the behavior patterns for later on. If, however, there is a lack of approval (reinforcement) for activities that would have been approved of at home, then what is known as extinction can occur.²⁹ With the removal of familiar objects, people, food and entertainment, loneliness can set in even though the unfortunate visitor is surrounded by people. The extinction phase can be prolonged by periodic reinforcement by peers or communication from home.

Confusion can be extreme when the visitor sees patterns of reinforcement and disapproval in cues that do not mean the same thing to visitor and host. Prime examples are laughing and smiling. Westerners smile mostly for amusement, and so there are many

²⁸ Guthrie, George M. "Learning to Live in an Alien Society." Chapter Included by: Richard Brislin and Stephen Buckner and Walter Lonner ed. Cross-Cultural Perspectives on Learning. New York: Sage Publications, 1975. p107.

²⁹ *ibid*

situations in western society where a smile would be out of place or rude. However to a Thai person, a smile is meant to convey amusement, embarrassment, to excuse an unintended offence, to sooth ruffled feelings, to thank, to avoid commenting on something, to share in what is an awkward moment for someone else, or to return a greeting.³⁰ If the visitor doesn't feel that he is receiving reinforcement for his actions, and being punished for things that would be acceptable elsewhere, then his learning will be impeded.

Intercultural activities, in which someone from one culture is confronted with an example of the reality of another, dissimilar, culture, are opportunities for successful exchanges as well as misunderstandings. One of the major problems that may arise is when a person is faced with behavior from a member of the new culture that he does not understand. He will try and evaluate it from the perspective of his own experience, and has a high probability of attributing an incorrect meaning to the other's action. In order for an intercultural experience to succeed, the participants require *isomorphic attributions*. These correspond to the idea that, "if I had been raised in this culture, and had the experiences that he has had, I would behave in the same manner."³¹ And because a person typically views his own behavior as controlled by external factors and usually reasonable, isomorphic attributions will make him more inclined to make a positive evaluation of the other.

One way to increase a student's understanding of isomorphic attributions is by culture training. One approach to training is a *culture assimilator*, suggested by Stolurow and Osgood and developed by Fielder and Triandis.³² In this technique, students are presented with many 'items,' each of which consists of six pages. The first page is a narrative of an

³⁰ Culture Shock! Thailand. pp18-22.

³¹ Triandis, Jeffrey. "Culture Training, Cognitive Complexity and Interpersonal Attitudes." Chapter Included by: Richard Brislin and Stephen Buckner and Walter Lonner ed. Cross-Cultural Perspectives on Learning. New York: Sage Publications, 1975. pp41-43.

³² Triandis, Jeffrey. "Culture Training, Cognitive Complexity and Interpersonal Attitudes." Chapter Included by: Richard Brislin and Stephen Buckner and Walter Lonner ed. Cross-Cultural Perspectives on Learning. New York: Sage Publications, 1975. pp70-73.

intercultural exchange, in which a problem or misunderstanding occurs. The next sheet presents four options as to why the problem happened, which can be considered attributions of the detailed behavior. Only one of these attributions is correct, and the student must select the one he thinks most appropriate. The remaining four pages in the item relate to the four choices, so if the student is correct, when he turns to the appropriate page he will be congratulated and told why it is correct. If it was incorrect he'll receive a small hint and instructed to read it again and select another answer.

This procedure could increase the extent to which someone from one culture is able to make attributions that are isomorphic with another. Also, once the correct attributions are made he will be able to better predict the behavior of someone from another culture. After going through the process with numerous items, certain features that the items have in common will become apparent. These are called cultural principles, and will guide him in future dealings so that he can recognize certain situations and attribute them accordingly.³³ Assimilator training is short and focused compared to an extended course in language and culture, but it is ideal for a limited time frame.

In addition to the culture assimilator, Guthrie proposes other methods of enhancing culture learning. As a solid starting point, he emphasizes the importance of language instruction. Beyond that, he recommends models in the form of native informants, role playing, films, and accounts from people who have already mastered the second culture.³⁴ While it is very valuable to have people who have a complete understanding of the new culture, it may be even better to have people who are most familiar with our own culture and can relate to what the future travelers will be going through. They are more apt to understand

³³ Davidson, Andrew R. "Cognitive Differentiation and Culture Training." Chapter Included by: Richard Brislin and Stephen Buckner and Walter Lonner ed. Cross-Cultural Perspectives on Learning. New York: Sage Publications, 1975. pp79-81.

³⁴ Guthrie, George M. "Learning to Live in an Alien Society." Chapter Included by: Richard Brislin and Stephen Buckner and Walter Lonner ed. Cross-Cultural Perspectives on Learning. New York: Sage Publications, 1975. p112.

the hurdles that will be faced by people planning on traveling to a new culture, having already experienced them themselves. For these reasons, it seems that a mixture of tactics would be the best way to accomplish culture learning.

There are many ways to stimulate interest in interaction between two cultures. One such way is through a pen-pal program. Today, the tradition paper and pencil approach to pen-pal programs has been replaced with email. This approach has made interaction simple and fast; and for this reason pen-pal programs have become more successful. In 1992, a program called Intercultural E-Mail Classroom Connections (IECC) was formed in order to connect teachers from various countries via e-mail, to provide classroom pen pal programs and to help propose project exchanges. Although the intent of this program was to originally target college and university faculty and assist them in classroom email partnerships, there was a large interest from the teachers at the K-12 grade level. In the first week, over 200 requests to participate in the program were received from the United States, Canada, Saudi Arabia, Finland, the Netherlands, Mexico, Italy, and Australia. Since the start of the IECC, there have been 28,000 requests to participate in the rapidly expanding program. Currently there are approximately 7,650 teachers in 82 countries who participate in at least one of the email lists. Teachers and students alike have found the program to be enlightening, hence the ever-increasing membership.³⁵

More direct methods of cultural interaction are also advocated by various organizations. One such method is a hosting program, whereby a student goes to live with a family that is a resident of that country which they are visiting. The effectiveness of such programs is heralded by many who have taken part in them. Testimonials from AFS Intercultural Programs participants claim that such programs “open doors to the world.”³⁶

³⁵ <http://www.iecc.org/>

³⁶ Andrea Maltese, 18, Paraguay → United States. AFS Exchange Student 1998-1999

Although there may be trade-offs in terms of stress or culture shock, over all the benefits of visiting a new culture seem to far outweigh the negatives. While in the process of gaining knowledge about others, their differences may make students look to themselves, and a profound opportunity for personal growth arises. Cultural experience through interaction and immersion are deemed by many students to be difficult at times, but well worth it, for, “learning that there are different ways of doing things, not wrong or right, just different, has also taught me to appreciate my own country and culture.”³⁷ That is truly what both WPI and CU hope to teach their students, and such lessons require adequate preparation and continued learning through direct interaction in order to be most effective.

³⁷ Anna Helenius, 18, Finland → United States. AFS Exchange Student 1998-1999

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

The goal of our project was to present a set of recommendations to the Interdisciplinary Global Studies Division (IGSD) of Worcester Polytechnic Institute (WPI) and to the Office of International Affairs (OIA) of Chulalongkorn University (CU) aimed at enriching the cultural experience of the Bangkok Project Center for both WPI and CU students. In order to achieve this goal, it was necessary to speak with members or representatives of those groups that would most likely be affected by such recommendations, WPI Bangkok Project Center participants and CU students and faculty, in order to determine the most beneficial way to expand cross-cultural interaction for all parties involved. Having spoken with several members or representatives of these groups, the data obtained was analyzed and common themes or suggestions extracted, which were presented to the WPI and CU international project planners.

3.1 DISCOVER WAYS TO PROMOTE A MORE REWARDING CULTURAL EXPERIENCE

In order to determine possible ways in which the cross-cultural experience at the Bangkok Project Center could be improved, it was necessary to seek the opinions of the Bangkok IQP participants of 2001. WPI students were questioned about the effectiveness of their pre-Bangkok cultural classes so that, in the future, WPI might be able to send more culturally aware students to Thailand who would be more capable of interacting with the CU students while also getting more from the Bangkok experience. Because our recommendations sought to suggest programs and activities that would be of benefit to both WPI students and CU students, it was also necessary to determine those activities and programs in which the CU students would be interested. Professors, primarily from the Faculty of Art's English Department, were also consulted in order to determine if such

interaction could be helpful academically for the students of their classes. A general idea of the interest amongst the students was also ascertained through speaking with the CU students and faculty.

3.1.1 LEARN HOW TO IMPROVE THE BANGKOK PREPARATION

In order to make recommendations about how the preparatory classes could be improved, it was necessary to find out what students thought about the current courses. By interviewing the Bangkok participants of 2001, feedback about the preparation experience was collected. After analyzing the objectives and the nature of the interviewees, it was determined that the benefits of using focus group interviews greatly outweighed the disadvantages. While most of the groups of students we spoke with had relatively similar cultural backgrounds, two of the groups contained members whose backgrounds in Thai culture contributed additional depth and relevance to the data gathered.

Speaking with the Bangkok Project Center participants of 2001 allowed us to determine their thoughts and feelings about how well they were prepared by WPI for the entirely new cultural experience that Thailand presented. The objective of our data gathering was to explore the range of opinions held by the current Bangkok Project Center participants. Positive and negative aspects were discussed, as well as what they felt to be valuable or irrelevant, which provided direction for analyzing aspects of the preparation courses that should be left untouched or might need changing. By also asking for their suggestions on how to better prepare future Bangkok-bound participants, a wealth of creativity and ideas was made available that far exceeded our thought process. It was the potential of these ideas and thoughts that led to consideration of focus groups as an effective means of gathering data.

Before the interviewing could begin it was necessary to decide whether individual or focus group interviews were more appropriate for our objectives in data gathering. Considering that we intended to discover a range of opinions about a matter that all the interviewees had participated in together, and referring to Table 3.1, located on page 25, it was determined that focus group interviews were the most effective means of gathering data. One of the benefits of conducting focus group interviews was that they allowed interactions to take place between the stakeholders. By letting the students discuss with each other the questions presented to them, ideas and thoughts that any one individual might not have thought of surfaced. Meanings or representations that emerged were more influenced by the social nature of the groups' interaction.³⁸ While the topics of conversation were kept on track by the moderators, focus groups allowed for much more feedback from the students with a minimum of added bias from the researchers. Also, the method of data acquisition employed allowed us to speak in-depth with the entire Bangkok IQP population, thereby minimizing the chance of overlooking the thoughts or ideas of any one individual. By employing focus groups, we not only spurred a deeper conversation that might not otherwise have occurred, but we also removed much of the bias that we, as the researchers, could have inflicted on the interviewees.

A major disadvantage of focus groups is the tendency for group thought to occur or for one person to dominate the conversation. The aspect of group thought was something that was minimized to an extent by breaking the Bangkok Project Center participants into smaller groups for their interviews. However, due to the fact that interviews were conducted so late into the project, discussion was bound to have occurred between the groups and given rise to some unavoidable group thought. The role of the moderator was not only to present the questions to the group and to guide the discussion, but also to make sure that participation

³⁸ Bauer, Martin and George Gaskell. Qualitative Researching: With Text, Image and Sound. London: Sage Publications, 2000.

was relatively equal and that everyone's thoughts were heard. In these ways, we hoped to lessen if not eliminate the negative aspects associated with group interviews.

Table 3.1 *A Summary of the Indications for Use of Individual and Group Interviews*

| Individual Interviews | Group Interviews |
|---|--|
| <p><i>Objective of Research:</i> Investigate the life of an individual in-depth Conduct case studies by repeating interviews over time Pretest a survey</p> <p><i>Topic of Research:</i> Individual experiences or choices Sensitive topics</p> <p><i>Interviewees for Research are:</i> Difficult to recruit People of importance or high stature Children</p> | <p><i>Object of Research:</i> Make researcher familiar with surroundings Discover range of attitudes or opinions Observe issues where interviewees agree/disagree Supplement quantitative data with qualitative</p> <p><i>Topic of Research:</i> Issues of common concern Hypothetical questions or ideas</p> <p><i>Interviewees for Research are:</i> From backgrounds similar enough to stimulate Conversation</p> |

Adapted from Gaskell³⁹

The focus groups were comprised of the various project teams currently at work in Bangkok. These project teams were, for our intents and purposes, natural groups, meaning that the participants worked together in the same groups outside of our research, as opposed to artificial groups, which are groups formed solely for research purposes. The use of a natural group is highly recommended for a group already concerned with the question under discussion, independent of the research being conducted.⁴⁰ Natural groups tend to produce a more comfortable atmosphere because the participants are already familiar with each other, and the interviewees often feel less like they are being studied. The groups were also homogeneous, meaning that they shared similar backgrounds as far as the research was concerned. While the scope of discussion with a homogenous group can be limited by the

³⁹ Bauer, Martin and George Gaskell. *Qualitative Researching: With Text, Image and Sound*. London: Sage Publications, 2000.

⁴⁰ Neissen, M (1977, p64). Quoted by Uwe Flick. *An Introduction to Qualitative Research*. London: Sage Publications, 1998. p117.

members' similar backgrounds which can lead to sameness of ideas, the interviewees are usually able to more effectively feed off of each other.⁴¹

Questions for the Bangkok Project Center participants of 2001 were developed based on the interview objectives. The questions asked were open-ended so as to stimulate the thought processes of the participants and no limit them to yes or no answers. The questions themselves were geared towards uncovering information about both the preparation courses and their feelings on the cultural value of interaction with CU students. While feedback about the questions was sought from both of our faculty advisors, the first focus group conducted was, in essence, the pretest for our questions. Because of the dynamic nature of a focus group, and because the questions were so specifically targeted at the WPI Bangkok Project Center Participants, effective pretesting would have been very difficult. Such considerations have led one seasoned researcher to say, "run your first interview. If the questions don't work, it was a pretest. If they do, it was your first group."⁴² When the first focus group conducted yielded responses in line with our goal, we proceeded to speak with the rest of the current Bangkok IQP student body with the same general questions in mind (see Appendix C).

A total of twenty-seven WPI students, comprised of six groups of four students and one group of three, were interviewed. Two researchers were present at each interview, one to moderate, and one to document the responses. The main task of the moderator, in addition to proposing the questions, was to make sure that single participants did not dominate the conversation and that everyone was given an equal opportunity to voice their opinions.⁴³

⁴¹ Bauer, Martin and George Gaskell. Qualitative Researching: With Text, Image and Sound. London: Sage Publications, 2000. pp41-43

⁴² Rubin, Herbert J and Irene S. Qualitative Interviewing: The Art of Hearing Data. London: Sage Publications, 1995.

⁴³ Flick, Uwe. An Introduction to Qualitative Research. London: Sage Publications, 1998. pp118-119

A tape recorder was used to document the conversation, while the second researcher recorded non-verbal communications.

3.1.2 DETERMINE DESIRE FOR WPI-CU RELATIONS

In addition to the questions asked about the Bangkok preparation, WPI student focus groups were questioned about their desire for interaction with CU students. Because of the bilateral nature of our goal, it was also necessary to speak with CU administrators, members of the CU faculty and representatives of the student body. From these groups we sought to gauge the interest amongst the student body in such interaction. Professors were consulted to determine if such social interaction could be of benefit to the students of CU academically, while the administrators represented the interests of the school as a whole in such interaction.

During the course of the focus group interviews with the WPI students, in addition to the preparation, interaction with Thai people was also discussed. By speaking with the current Bangkok IQP project participants, we hoped to determine, because of their hindsight, how social interaction with CU students could have enriched their cultural experience throughout their stay in Thailand. Also of interests was the level of interest amongst the WPI students for interacting with CU students both during their stay in Bangkok as well as before they even arrived to the Project Center. Of equal importance was finding out if such interest was reciprocated on the CU side.

We chose to employ the use of individual interviews as a means of ascertaining thoughts and opinions from CU administrators, professors and student leaders. This form of data gathering was the most sound because of the diversity of the groups involved and the high status of many of the people being interviewed. Referring again to Table 3.1, it is clear that such heterogeneous groups would likely have made a poor choice for focus groups because their interests and concerns would have been so varied that they would have found

very little common ground, making them unproductive. Homogeneous focus groups, consisting of members from similar disciplines, were too difficult to schedule and therefore unable to be arranged. Surveys could not be applied to gauge the interests amongst the CU student body about interaction because the only method that could have been applied in such a short amount of time would be a convenience sample. Such a haphazard sampling method would yield meaningless results since a survey can only be deemed representative if all members of the sample population have an equal probability of being chosen.⁴⁴ A survey, which yields either quantitative data or qualitative data that can not be followed up on, would either not have exposed us to suggestions about how to make WPI-CU social interaction successful or would have provided suggestions that could not have been clarified if need be. In addition, our limited amount of time in which to conduct our research did not allow for such a thorough approach to surveying that is required.

Topical interviews, in which the discussion is geared toward ascertaining information about a particular event or process,⁴⁵ were used to interview the various members of CU. This style of interview allowed a less rigid approach to questions. Rather than just asking questions directly, we were able to steer the conversation towards the topics that we were interested in by presenting the interviewee with an idea of our goal at the start of the interview, and then by making comments referring back to the goal in order to keep the interview on track. This style of interview created a comfortable atmosphere in which the interviewees were more willing to vocalize their brainstorming. The price that was paid for such comfort was that the interviews were relatively unstructured. This was not a problem since the interviews sought to bring to light ideas that would not necessarily correspond or contrast even if the exact same questions were asked of each individual.

⁴⁴ Babbie, Earl R. Survey Research Methods. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing, 1973. p78.

⁴⁵ Rubin, Herbert J and Irene S. Qualitative Interviewing: The Art of Hearing Data. London: Sage Publications, 1995. pp26-29.

While the order and content of each interview was unique, we, as the moderators, made sure to have three issues addressed in each interview: would CU students be genuinely interested in interaction with American students from WPI; would interaction with Americans be beneficial academically and socially for CU students; and what activities would likely attract CU students. These questions addressed the topics of primary concern for successful interaction between WPI and CU. Due to the non-intrusive nature of the questions, and because the questions were deemed straightforward by Phiroon Anake, a CU student, no further pre-test was conducted. A total of three administrative professors, that is professors involved in the administration of the school as well, and five student representatives were interviewed. The specifics of these interviews can be found in Appendix A.

All of the focus group discussions and individual interviews were recorded onto magnetic tape so that the conversation could flow naturally without any one person's comments be overlooked. For this reason, it was necessary to transcribe all of the focus group and interview conversations after they occurred. Having gathered information from the WPI Bangkok Project Center participants of 2001 about the Bangkok preparation courses and from WPI students as well as CU administration, faculty and students about culturally enriching interaction, we proceeded to analyze the data so that we might be able to make informed recommendations to the IGSD and the Office of International Affairs.

3.2 ANALYZE INFORMATION TO DEVELOP RECOMMENDATIONS

Having transcribed the data, we employed content analysis in order to relate the results of the interviews to our objectives. Grouping the data into categories allowed us to compare and contrast the suggestions and opinions of different people. By examining the information in each category and comparing these ideas to our goal statement, the relevance

of each conclusion to our research was determined.⁴⁶ After considering the feasibility of various themes and ideas, recommendations were developed through a direct extension of the ascertained results.

In order to determine the general opinions of those interviewed, the transcripts were read over, and themes and hypotheses were extracted from the responses obtained. Deductive content analysis, in which the results are coded according to categories that directly relate to a pre-established area of interest, was used in order to help us take from the interviews those points that were relevant to our research.⁴⁷ By studying the frequency with which a word or theme occurred in the interviews, we were able to judge how important an idea or concept was to the stakeholder groups. Actions were also considered; for instance, if an interviewee exhibited some distinctive body language such as eye rolling when discussing a particular topic, we were inclined to believe that he or she might have been displeased with that topic for some reason.

We extracted the prevalent themes, and, using this information, we were able to determine how the current Bangkok Project Center students felt about the cultural component of the preparation process. In a similar manner, we were able to obtain ideas about possible activities that could foster a closer relationship between the students of CU and WPI as well as to gauge the interest of the members of both CU and WPI that would be directly affected by such recommendations. The opinions of the CU students and professors as well as WPI students all had to be taken into account, because effort from both universities would be necessary for successful implementation. Thoughts and concerns of all of the parties potentially involved in a WPI-CU relationship, coupled with feedback about the level of

⁴⁶ Rubin, Herbert J and Irene S. Qualitative Interviewing: The Art of Hearing Data. London: Sage Publications, 1995.

⁴⁷ Berg, Bruce L. Qualitative Research Methods for the Social Sciences 3rd ed. Boston, Allyn and Bacon: 1998. p230.

cultural awareness achieved by the Bangkok preparation courses, were taken into account when formulating recommendations.

After analyzing the information received from the focus groups, recommendations about how to best enhance the cultural experience of the Bangkok Project Center participants and about how to foster WPI-CU interaction were prepared. These recommendations were presented to project planners at both WPI and CU in hopes that they might prove to be beneficial input around which to structure future interactions. We also hoped that by presenting the report to both universities, they might gain a better understanding of each other's needs.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

The Bangkok Project Center contains greater cultural barriers than any other project center, but the enrichment to be gained from experience of such a different culture is immense. Speaking with WPI students revealed that they were interested in meeting with Chulalongkorn University (CU) students who could serve as their guides and friends, allowing them to truly experience Thai culture. CU student representatives reciprocated a desire for interaction emphasizing that many Thai students would be interested in learning about American culture. CU students and administrators alike suggested that several purely social events that brought WPI and CU students together would be enough to spur friendships that would allow for the cultural enhancement of both WPI and CU students, exposing both sides to worlds very different from their own. In addition to onsite cultural enrichment, the preparation for Bangkok-bound students was considered. After speaking with groups of current Bangkok Project Center participants, it became clear that, while the preparation offered to them at Worcester Polytechnic Institute (WPI) helped prepare them for the culture of Thailand and helped ease their entry into Thai society, there were several aspects of the preparation courses that could be improved.

4.1 IMPROVING ONSITE CULTURAL ENRICHMENT

In many ways, the hardest way to expose someone to a culture is to simply immerse them in the culture itself. Bangkok participants have expressed their frustration with being treated like foreigners because it takes away any real chance to experience Thai culture. This is quite understandable for, as most social scientists agree, gaining access to such a different culture, such a different field setting, often requires the intervention of members of that group

whose lives one is seeking to experience.⁴⁸ With the residences of the Bangkok Project Center located on the campus of Chulalongkorn University, one of the most prestigious universities in Thailand, it seems logical that interaction between CU and WPI students would be beneficial for WPI students. CU administrators see the interaction as amazingly beneficial to their students as well, for they will have a chance to practice their English and get a perception of American culture. Indeed, the returns on social interaction, such as cultural enrichment and friendships, are much higher than the costs, which are as small as setting up several social activities on the center of the CU campus. The issue of academic interaction, however, is a more complicated issue; one that might be able to be tackled once the advantages of social interaction are physically apparent.

There exists, amongst the Bangkok participants, a very strong desire to experience authentic Thai culture. This desire is emphasized by the responses yielded by participants when asked about culture in Thailand. When the Bangkok Project Center participants were asked which parts of the trip they found to be the most culturally enriching, one of the most common answers related to time spent with Thai people. Furthermore, many focus groups spoke about how disappointing it was that the school arranged trips appeared to be contain one tourist trap after the next. One respondent sarcastically remarked that going to the floating market was like “going to Sturbridge Village back home.” WPI students were for the most part not impressed or interested with the feigned Thai culture that they were exposed to. While many found the excursions to be very enjoyable, very few were convinced that they had experienced true Thai culture, for they were seen as *farang*, as outsiders.

When questioned about what they thought the nature of the relationship with CU students should be, Bangkok Project Center interviewees for the most part responded that the

⁴⁸ Berg, Bruce L. Qualitative Research Methods for the Social Sciences, 3rd ed. Boston, Allyn and Bacon: 1998. pp130-133.

relationships should be social and voluntary. WPI students expressed interest in possibly having some arranged orientation activities where they could mingle with CU students. Other students expressed interest in a pen-pal program, although there are contrasting opinions on how to pair WPI student up with CU students. Some expressed concern about being paired up with someone that they had nothing in common with or possibly offending them with something they write due to lack of cultural knowledge. While these concerns are valid, their impact is questionable. Offense of students is unlikely seeing as though all students involved would be aware that their counterparts on the other side of the world have little or no understanding of their cultures. That said, all agreed that a pen-pal program would prove to be advantageous in enhancing their cultural experience before they left for Bangkok and in continuing to enhance their experience after they arrive.

Representatives of the CU student body expressed that many of the Thai students would be very interested in speaking with and socializing with American students from WPI. It was further discovered that the needs for a successful orientation would be very similar to those expressed by WPI students. They suggested that cook-outs and various sports would be an excellent way of socializing with Thai students. Further, many of those interviewed mentioned camping as an exciting and popular way for Thai students to bond with other students. CU student representatives all agreed that the activities would have to be cheap if not free in order to generate interest amongst the student body and that such occurrences would have to be well-advertised if a significant turnout was desired. Furthermore, CU students agreed that activities would have to be held on the main campus, not at the Suksitnives Dormitory, for the dormitory is not well known and quite far off of the main campus. The acting Assistant President of Student Affairs, an administrator and professor in the Faculty of Fine Arts, suggested that it might also be possible to arrange a study tour where students from CU would show WPI students around Bangkok. This would address the

concerns of WPI students about finding guides to show them around the city, and would also prove both socially beneficial for CU students who would have a chance to practice their English and experience a taste of American culture.

Despite the fact that these suggestions seek to present social activities, getting some of the CU faculties such as the English Department in the Faculty of Fine Arts involved in student interaction could prove beneficial. We learned of a class offered by CU called Spoken Communication, in which students of all majors come together and must spend the entire time speaking English. We have also learned of a program employed currently at CU that brings together CU students majoring in the study of the Japanese language and Japanese exchange students for purely social reasons. Teachers from the Faculty of Fine Arts recognize the significance of their students interacting with people who speak the language that their students are studying and would certainly be champions of a program that offered exposure to Americans. We have been told that CU does not have significant funds to send many students overseas. Because of the immense expense of life in America, few students that major in English have the opportunity to visit a country where English is the spoken language. Through the interaction of WPI students with CU English majors, several English faculty feel that we will bring America to them.

The significant advantage of fostering interaction through the Faculty of Fine Arts, as opposed to holding activities on the main campus, is that interaction with students is guaranteed. The disadvantage of course is that since it is so much more structured, WPI and CU will have to do quite a bit of conferring to come to an arrangement on how best to implement interaction within the Faculty of Fine Arts. For these reasons, we suggest that WPI contact either the Student Union, the Foreign Relations Club or the English Club to discuss with them the possibility of arranging some orientation activities such as soccer or a cook-out to occur during the first week after the students have arrived. By holding several

inexpensive activities early in the project term, it will be possible for students to foster close friendships, and through those friendships, culturally enhance each other's lives. We also recommend that WPI and the Faculty of Fine Arts get in contact with each other about how best to arrange for interaction between English-speaking CU students and Bangkok Project Center participants. If both the campus activities and the Fine Arts arrangements are successful, WPI students will meet many people with different interests and different backgrounds. Likewise, more CU students will be exposed to Americans and American culture. If, however, one of the programs is does not yield the desired results, another will exist to supplement it.

While social interaction appears relatively easy to implement, quite rewarding, and desired by all parties involved, academic interaction presented a much more complicated scenario. Every CU administrator and faculty member that we were able to speak with was eager to establish some sort of student or faculty exchange with WPI, but that is beyond the scope of this project. While professors agreed that interacting with Americans would help CU students greatly with their English, that does not constitute academic interaction on the WPI projects. One administrator and member of the Faculty of Fine Arts suggested that WPI students might be able to work on their projects with CU students whose majors of study corresponded with the various projects.

While this is an interesting idea, there was concern expressed on the part of the WPI students that the academic inconsistencies between the two schools could cause problems. While WPI students are freed from all other academic commitments while completing overseas IQPs, CU students would have a full course load in addition to the project. Another concern was the aspect of ownership of the project. To many it would seem unfair to grade a project based on the efforts of non-WPI students; it would not make sense for a WPI group to get an A on a project based mostly on the efforts of a group of CU students. To address this,

of course, it could be proposed that the WPI and CU students have their own, clearly defined aspects of a project to deal with, but then one could argue that such an arrangement would not be interaction, just coexistence. While academic interaction on projects is ultimately desired, we recommend that, for the time being, the interaction between the students of the two universities remain social. With further research and a base of social interaction from which to build, we are convinced that academic interaction between the two universities on projects will eventually be a reality. While there is much to consider when analyzing cultural enrichment at the project center, the preparation of WPI students in the months leading up to their departure for Asia is an important step in cultural enrichment.

4.2 EVALUATION OF THE BANGKOK PROJECT CENTER PREPARATION COURSES

Prior to leaving for the Bangkok Project Center, all participants partook in preparation classes aimed at easing the students' entry into Thai culture in hopes of enriching their cultural experience. While all agree that the courses were helpful, most had suggestions about certain aspects that could be improved to yield an even more enriching experience. In addition, students expressed concern about the effectiveness and validity of the readings. However, most Bangkok students found the preparation adequate for easing their entry into Thai society and making sense of the events occurring around them.

A basic understanding of the language and the culture of Thailand provided the Bangkok Project Center participants with a sense of confidence and understanding that helped whet their appetites for exploring Bangkok and its wealth of culture. All seven groups noted that they found basic words that they learned, such as greeting words and Thai numbers, to be quite helpful in communicating on a basic level with people that they encountered. Emphasis on basic cultural differences, such as the Thai people's respect for their king and their elders, many groups commented, gave them insight into the intricacies of

Thai culture. Many also claimed that their efforts to speak the native language, rather than expecting those around them to speak English, helped them gain the respect of people that they encountered.

While the WPI students felt that the basics of Thai language and culture conveyed to them through the preparation courses was useful, they expressed concern about the relevance of the topics covered as the course progressed beyond its first two lessons. While there was not one group in the seven interviewed that questioned the importance the vocabulary and phrases conveyed in the first two lessons of the Thai language and culture class, many felt that the vocabulary learned was not relevant to most of the conversations that they started. Many participants were able to argue over fares with tuktuk drivers, but had no idea how to tell him to make a left turn at the next street.

Groups also found that certain phrases and cultural attributes taught in the preparation classes were either too formal or out dated. Several groups commented that when they attempted to give a person the current time in the way that they had been taught or said *yindii tii dai ruu chuk* (It is nice to meet you), people looked at them like they were from another planet. These individuals later learned that those phrases were very formal and not often used in casual conversation. People also commented that the conservative descriptions that they had heard about Thai people in their preparation classes led them to believe that they would encounter people with vastly different thoughts and concerns in their lives. These ideas led most groups to be quite surprised when they arrived and found most Thais their age to have very similar interests. However, what surprised a few groups most was the *mai pen rai* attitude of Thai people, something for which they feel they were not adequately prepared. However, few groups seemed to have realized that this very different philosophy about timeliness and blame was discussed in depth in almost every session of the Thai language and culture class. It is likely that because the Thais' attitude is so radically different from those

ideas held by people in the United States that no amount of preparation could fully prepare the students for such a change of ideology.

Despite complaints about the formality of some of the phrases that were taught, WPI students were still able to communicate, and in a very respectable manner at that. However, based on the feedback of current Bangkok Project Center participants, the Thai language course would better serve the students if more time was spent developing more of a tourist's vocabulary of basic words and phrases that would help them order food or give directions to a taxi, rather than teaching them the names of the months or how to say that they had traveled by plane. We also recommended that Thai students from WPI be brought in to the Thai class as guest speakers, in order to provide the Bangkok-bound students with an idea of the common phrases, activities and the popular trends of Thai people their own age. These small modifications to the Thai language and culture class would allow students to better communicate on a basic level with people in Thailand, and hence further enrich their cultural experience.

Feedback from the students suggests that the preparation books, Buddha, by Walter Henry Nelson, and A Siamese Tragedy, by Walden Bello et al, be replaced in order to better prepare Bangkok Project Center participants for the culture of Thailand. Buddha was considered by most to be an easy read and quite interesting, but not particularly valid to Thailand since it discussed the life of the Buddha rather than the principals of Buddhism and the practices of Buddhists. While many found A Siamese Tragedy to be quite informative, it was deemed by all groups interviewed to be "useless" to their cultural experience. While two groups commented that some of the information contained within the text was of use in their projects, most could not even claim that. In fact, several students admitted to not completing the book because the material was presented in such a fatuous manner. It must be considered that the role of A Siamese Tragedy in the preparation was in part to provide background

information about the events leading up to the current economic status of Thailand.

However, informative as the book may have been, most students were not excited by it, if they even finished it, and it certainly did not provide any cultural enrichment.

For these reasons, we recommended that the readings be changed to be more reflective of Thai culture. With Buddhism being such a large part of the culture of Thailand, it was wise for a book concerning Buddhism to be made part of the curriculum. However, a book that focuses more on the role of Buddhism in Thailand replace the current book which, despite being enjoyable to read, concerns itself more with the life of the Buddha than with the practices of the religion. It is recommended that several well-written articles concerning the current state of Thailand and the events leading up to it be provided if such a backdrop is desired by the Bangkok advisors. We suggest that an up-to-date Thai culture book that explains the dos and the don'ts for foreigners supplement these readings, since many groups mentioned that they felt they had received sparse cultural background on how to behave. One such book that has been critically acclaimed by several individuals in the Bangkok Project Center class of 2001 is Culture Shock! Thailand, by Robert and Nanthapa Cooper. This book, or one that is similar in content, would present the Bangkok-bound students with an idea of what are and are not acceptable mannerisms and Thailand, and also presents students with an up-to-date analysis of how Thai culture differs from Western culture.

Another way in which to educate Bangkok-bound students on western perceptions of Thai culture is through interaction with Americans who have been to Thailand. Most students said they would liked to have interacted more with previous participants, for example, to obtain suggestions of places to go. WPI students said they would have benefited from knowing the location of few restaurants where they could eat on the first day. Frequently mentioned was the fact that many of the respondents did not get to see everything they would have liked to in their time in Thailand. They felt that past Bangkok students

could have provided information to them on the benefits of going to the project center early or staying late. However, the project center and the cultural enrichment experienced there, is something which WPI hopes will be unique to each individual, and so such hand holding may not be appropriate.

Instead, we would recommend that there be several orientation activities for the recently accepted Bangkok Project Center participants during which they can meet each other and share their expectations for the upcoming trip. In this way, they might spur each other's imaginations and at the same time meet people whom they could travel with before and after the eight-week program. It is also recommended that a map of the immediate area around the Suksitnives Dormitory be drawn up. This map should contain several recommended restaurants in the area along with directions to get to the Mah Boon Krong shopping plaza. Such a map would provide the newly arriving students a means of sustenance and entertainment while they are working up to discovering everything that Bangkok holds beyond the immediate Suksitnives area. WPI would essentially provide a starting block for its project center students.

WPI and CU alike seek to culturally enrich their students by exposing them to members of other societies and cultures. The enrichment for WPI students starts in the United States where they participate in preparation courses that seek to teach them the basics of the language and the culture. This program is relatively new, and the current students of the Bangkok Project Center have expressed the aspects of the courses that have enriched their cultural experience, and the aspects that could be improved upon. By considering their thoughts and concerns, and by considering what the nature of cultural enrichment should be, we developed recommendations such that future participants of the project center might be better prepared for the culture that awaits them in Thailand. However, there is only so much

that can and should be done in a classroom. Eventually, understanding a culture becomes a matter of experiencing it rather than studying it. After determining that there was interest on the parts of both WPI and CU students in interacting with each other, we considered the opinions expressed by WPI students, CU students and CU administrators and developed a means of social engagement such that friendships might be formed and cultures might be shared. These suggestions do not force enrichment, for that is something that each student must willingly pursue. Rather, these suggestions provide a means for students to gain access to the resources needed to make the most of their time in Thailand.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Our research revealed that the WPI students showed interest in improving the current preparation courses for Bangkok-bound students and both WPI and CU representatives had an interest in forming interaction between the two universities. We developed recommendations for enhancing the cultural experience of Bangkok-bound students and improving the interaction between WPI and CU. After completing our research, we formulated suggestions for future study, which consist of ways to continually enhance the cultural experience of Bangkok Project Center participants through improvement of the preparation programs and increased interaction between WPI and CU.

Results from our interviews identified areas in which WPI students were satisfied with the preparation process but also areas that could be improved. WPI respondents generally felt that the preparation courses were beneficial to some extent, but were concerned about some of the areas of Thai language that were taught and the accuracy of the cultural information received. Overall, students felt that a curriculum that better represented what they would be experiencing in Thailand would have been more beneficial. To achieve this, we recommended that Thai students serve as guest speakers and that books relevant to the current situation in Thailand be incorporated into the preparation curriculum.

Our results also indicated that WPI and CU representatives were interested in increasing social and academic interaction between the two universities. Respondents felt that more interaction would enhance the cultural experience of students from both universities. In order to increase interaction between WPI and CU, we recommended that e-mail interaction be arranged between WPI and CU students prior to arrival of WPI students in Bangkok. We also recommended that low-cost activities, such as soccer games and cookouts, be offered upon arrival.

Chulalongkorn University presently interacts with several universities throughout the world. Although the type of interaction differs for each university, many are in the form of an academic relationship, with exchange programs being the most prevalent. It would be valuable to examine the relationships CU has with other universities and whether they have been beneficial to the participants both culturally and academically. By observing these interactions between universities, WPI may be able to discover additional ways to strengthen its relationship with CU.

Throughout our discussion with both WPI and CU representatives, many expressed an interest in working closely together in an academic setting. While most agreed that having CU students working on the IQP may not be feasible, they felt that working on separate aspects of the same project could. Future projects that involve both WPI and CU students would need to be examined carefully to ensure that the academic needs of both universities are met.

It may be beneficial to study other programs that enhance the cultural experience of students since time constraints prevented us from extensively researching such programs. We recommend that future researchers examine programs that attempt to bridge the gap between two cultures to determine whether programs have been beneficial to those involved and identify reasons why they have or have not been valuable. It would also be advantageous to recognize what problems each program faced and how program coordinators addressed them.

Several groups mentioned that partaking in a Thai class while onsite would help them further develop their Thai vocabulary and speaking abilities, hence allowing them to experience more of Thai culture. Because students would be learning a language native to the country in which they were staying, Thai lessons could prove more effective since students would have opportunities to hone their newly acquired knowledge outside of class.

However, more required work that might cut into students' social lives may not be appreciated. Several have already commented that deadlines and required meetings and trips cut into their time that they would rather have spent in different ways. It is therefore recommended that future research be conducted concerning the option of partaking in a Thai class while onsite.

WPI and CU have an interest in increasing interaction between the two universities and developing a better cultural understanding. Improving programs would enhance the cultural experience of Bangkok-bound students and increase interaction between the two universities. Implementing our recommendations may ultimately help augment understanding between the two cultures.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: CU INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTS

INTERVIEW NUMBER 1

Date: Wednesday, February 14th, 2001

Time: 3:00pm – 4:00pm

Location: Chulalongkorn University – Student Activities Building

Mrs. ? Assistant President of Student Affairs at Chulalongkorn University and Faculty of
Arts English Teacher (13 yrs.)
Samuel Tannatt Electrical Engineer, WPI
Jeffrey Cusato Electrical Engineer, WPI

ATTN: For this transcription the Mrs. ? will be referred to as the following: CU. Both Samuel and Jeffrey will be referred to as WPI for they are the ones conducting the interview.

WPI – Could you tell us a little bit about your job here at Chula?

CU – Yes, I am an English teacher in the faculty of arts English department and I've been teaching here for 13 years. Right now I'm having another job for the university, which is the assistant to the president of student affairs. And my duty is to take care of students' extracurricular activities for the university.

WPI – Well that's fantastic, you are definitely the person that were looking to speak with. We are from Worcester Polytechnic Institute and I am not sure if you know, but we have been in residence here in 1989 doing some programs with the local community.

{understands who WPI is, nodding about WPI}

And we have something called and IQP which is basically a project that focuses on social interaction and how our engineering jobs actually affect the real world.

{nodding about the IQP}

And so one of the things that WPI is very proud of with its Bangkok Project Center is that the culture is very different from the US {smiles with culture difference comment} and it presents a very unique opportunity for us to experience a different culture, different language, and different food. We were wondering if you could see ways in which interaction between WPI and CU students would be beneficial academically for Chula.

CU – Do you mean exchanging students?

WPI – Not necessarily exchanging students, at this point, just social interaction – we were here getting together with groups of students – if that would be beneficial for the Chula students both academically and socially.

CU – Yes, definitely {very affirmative}. Have you had a chance to meet with Chula students?

WPI – Yes, in fact we were working with them on another project for a while which didn't actually work out but we managed to meet several Chula students and have remained pretty good friends with them.

CU – Okay, which faculty?

WPI – The Environmental Engineering.

CU – Graduate students?

WPI – No. Senior year.

CU – Senior year, okay.

WPI – Do you think the Chula students would be excited about interacting with American students?

CU – Yes, right now {very excited about American idea}... I think they realize that globalization, internationalization is quite important... the Thai students need to communicate

WPI – Are there organizations on campus that would be willing to set up student interaction?

CU – I think, they have what we call foreign affairs club, and debating team {laughing}. Those students are quite fluent in English and they are comfortable speaking in English

WPI – Do you think that it would be beneficial for them as well?

CU – Yes, to exchange the ideas, cultural differences.

WPI – on that note, do you have programs in mind or that you could think of that could help foster a closer relationship between the students of WPI and CU?

CU – {some mumbling – collecting of thoughts – she thinks and looks to the side – returns with} Right now what I think of... if you contact the faculty first that provide the concepts related to what you've been working on at your institute, like the faculty of engineering, or the faculty that have an interest in the subject or are interested in English

WPI – You said that you were an English teacher as well?

CU – Yes.

WPI – From a teacher's perspective, do you feel that interaction between the two students would be helpful for your class?

CU – Of course. Definitely, because I would like to inform you that English is not our second language, it is a foreign language, and normal Thai students do not use English in everyday life. They use it in the classroom, of course, but outside of classroom, they all speak Thai. It is different from the students from Abak, another college in Bangkok. At Abak, it is obligatory that all students speak in English, when they are in class, and out of class, even when they speak to each other. But I don't know right now if it is changing or not, but, that's the rule. But it's different here in Chula. We have freedom of speech {all laughing} but you know, I think the students who are interested in speaking, you know, communicating with foreigners, others whose language ability is ok... otherwise, although they would like to speak to you, the language would be the problem, they are afraid that you won't understand them. But they are friendly.

WPI – Oh yeah we know. We felt the same way when we tried to speak our Thai and no one understood us {all laughing} At this point our project is looking to present recommendations to both CU and WPI about ways in which first they can foster a closer social relationship with the students. And then in a couple years we are thinking it might be possible to build off of that and start having an academic relationship. But right now, our concentration is purely how to make closer ties socially. Do you have any recommendations about how we could go about that at least on the CU side?

CU – [during question she nods very intently – she picks up key words and repeats them – i.e. socially] Okay, maybe work with a study tour

WPI – A study tour?

CU – You come here and have some kind of arrangement for you too. Thai students can be guides. Not academy twit {all laughing}. But you can discuss something like social problems, social issues, and your culture, difference in culture, something like that. And they can take you to important places, tourist places in Bangkok, or the country

WPI – And do you think the students would be willing to do that?

CU – Oh sure.

WPI – That's good to hear {all laughing}

CU – Especially the students majoring in English in the faculty of art, and some students who are participating in extracurricular activities for the student union. I think you are meeting them tomorrow.

WPI – Yes.

CU – At what time?

WPI – Four. Do you have any other thought or concerns about any interaction between the students of the two universities?

CU – You mean students from your university interacting with our students?

WPI – Yes.

CU – Okay, if there is... if Thai student can go to the States and taking a course. Two or three weeks may not be enough... if it is possible if they go there for at least a semester or maybe one year and they can transfer their credits back to Chula {really pushing the exchange program idea}.

WPI – So eventually you would like to see an exchange of students?

CU – Yes... because when Thai students go there they realize how much American life... how much your American life is different from Thais... the good things and the bad things about culture. They will learn to be more mature... they will feel lucky to be in Thai society because they are more protected, with their family.

WPI – And from your assistant to the president's perspective, is that a perspective that the entire university is looking towards? Would they like to see an exchange program?

CU – Yes, yes... that's our policy. In order to compete with our students from, you know, universities like in Singapore or Malaysia it's important that Thai students need to have contact with students from America or Europe. That will broaden their horizon and thought.

WPI – Yeah looking on the international affairs web page, it seemed that there were much closer ties with Europe and Japan than with America. America it was a couple of professors being exchanged but no students. So America is an interest as a whole?

CU – Yes.

WPI – Do you feel that there is anything that's we've missed or anything else that you'd like to say about a closer cultural social relationship?

CU – What about teachers? An exchange of teachers, is it possible? {again, really pushing the exchange program idea}

WPI – Ah, I don't know. {all laughing}

CU – Because for my students, Junabunki University in Australia, for the last two years, Thai lecturer from faculty of art went to Australia to teach the intensive course Thai to Australian students at [name of school]. Have exchange program, and Australian students went to Thailand to study Thai as well and to live in the Thai community with a host family. Maybe, if it is possible, to exchange culture, one of your ... we can have some kind of arrangement that an American student from your institute came to Thailand and then stay with a host family... but it's quite hard. You need to really make them really get together, otherwise some problems will arise.

WPI – When teachers exchange with other universities, what do they come and teach? Do they usually teach a Thai class?

CU – Yes, right now still Thai class.

WPI – Do they teach any culture, any cultural classes?

CU – No, no, not yet.

WPI – Do you feel that there is anything else that we, the WPI students visiting Chula, or the Chula students already here, could do to make close cross-cultural ties, be they programs or other ideas that you have?

CU – Okay, here in the faculty of arts, we have what we call Thai studies section, under the faculty of arts. Sometimes some programs are arranged for foreigners. Like students from Austria here to study about Thai culture... and they've been here maybe two weeks and would go site seeing as well and take some other classes.

WPI – And does that also involve interaction with Chula students? Do they get involved?

CU – One thing that is not, that is one thing that is missing

WPI – Would that be something that may be possible to do?

CU – Yeah, we can arrange that. There is a program for interaction between Thai students and Japanese students. Thai students taking Japanese class can be kind of guides. Accompany the Japanese students when they come to Thailand

WPI – Could you tell us a little more about that?

CU – Yes, there have, actually I'm not quite sure about the length of time, but when they come to faculty of art, we arrange for the Thai student to talk to them, not academically but socially, as friends.

WPI – All right, so if we were to propose social meetings first, then that would be something that Chula has already experienced. Is there anything that you think we have missed? {all laughing}

CU – So you have study tour with social contact with students from Chula, student exchange and teacher exchange. {everyone nods their head in agreement}

WPI – Okay, well thank you so much for your time.

INTERVIEW NUMBER 2

Date: Thursday, February 15th, 2001

Time: 3:00pm – 4:15pm

Location: Chulalongkorn University – Student Activities Building Fl. 2

| | |
|-------------------|--|
| Mr. Ponglit | President Student Government of Chulalongkorn University Engineering Major |
| Miss Phrae | Secretary of Student Council of Chulalongkorn University (SCCU) Arts Major |
| Phiroon Anake 'A' | Environmental Engineer |
| Samuel Tannatt | Electrical Engineer, WPI |
| Jeffrey Cusato | Electrical Engineer, WPI |

ATTN: For this transcription the Chula students will be referred to as the following: CU[pres] and CU[sec] respectively. Both Samuel and Jeffrey will be referred to as WPI for they are the ones conducting the interview.

WPI: Could you tell us a little bit about the organization that you represent?

CU [pres]: My organization is student government at Chulalongkorn University
We manage all the activity in Chulalongkorn university such as the activities of all the clubs, all the clubs, and the main activity at Chulalongkorn University is Freshman Night Do you know October 23rd?

WPI: No. {laughing by all}

CU [pres]: It is very important day for Chulalongkorn University, it is because, it is the day that the King Rama, King Rama V, died .

We have a big ceremony that day and big activity.

In our organization there ten, ten main staff

There are president, secretary, 2 vice presidents, president of the department at Education, and then special welfare, and tradition.

All through the year we do, I have to tell you that the main mission of our organization is to manage all of the activities for and to make with most of the students here

And to look at the project, the activities project for each club

Let them tell us, what will you do this year, this project then this project.

And I will introduce you to another organization in the next room which is the student council of CU we have to call, we have to work together. The student council and we have many activities.

As you know I have to work through the year because of many of the activities when one activity is end, the next activity is coming... I end up spending more time on activity than on study but now I must spend more time on study then on activity

And I will tell you what ever you want to ask

WPI: Well, first I want to tell you a little bit about what we are doing here, we are both students from Worcester Polytechnic Institute which is in the United States of America, and we have a program at our school called an IQP. And the IQP stresses social interaction with other cultures and other students, and how our jobs as engineers have an effect on the real world. We have and a project center in Bangkok for eleven years, and recently the interest of students coming to Bangkok has grown a lot and professors back in the United States are looking to have closer ties with the Thai students, socially. Because one of the things that are university is very proud of about the Bangkok project center is that we experience a very different culture, different language, different food, different way of life so we are very proud of hat and we would like to make up some activities for Chula and our university for the eight weeks we are here so that we get a better idea of what your culture is like and in turn you will get a better idea of what American culture is like.

And you know, find out if your stereotypes about us are right or not. Just kind of foster friendships so that we can find out more about each other.

What we have come to talk to you about is how we would go about doing that, first would you think that Chula students would be interested in interacting with Americans?

CU[pres]: Actually our student here is interested about abroad, and I think about your exchange student is a good idea, all student would be interested especially the student in the faculty of art because they have to study

about the different language behind the department of English, Germany, Spain so I think this would be the perfect experience for them.

About Thai culture I think you are all I have to tell you one thing that {enter the secretary of student council} She is the secretary of student council.

WPI: Sawatdii kap.

CU [pres]: {They converse in Thai} Please repeat the question again so she can help me to answer.

WPI: I will summarize what I told you. Basically we are from a university in the United States and we have a program in our university that looks to expose us to different culture t from our own, and to get us to interact socially with people from other cultures, and see how our engineering jobs will affect the real world when we get out there.

So our university was very concerned with the global world, exposing us to the global world, and we are hear for 8 weeks doing projects with various government organizations and private organizations and we are residents at Suksit so we are on campus for 8 weeks and our university is very interested right now in having closer relationships between Chula students and WPI students, we are WPI students, so firstly we were curious about if Chula students would be interested in interacting socially just being friends and speaking with American students?

CU[sec]: first of all we have, at my faculty, I'm in the faculty of arts, students study languages and foreign cultures so its normal for a student at my faculty to interact with those students, especially the student in American student, so we can exchange culture knowledge and it is a kind of chance that we can speak these languages students from other countries like them.

In general, Chulalongkorn university students are not very open to foreigners and I think it is normal for a Thai student have they have quite a limited ability to speak English.

[pres] I think normal Thai student doesn't to talk to foreigner and that is the main cause of why we are not open.

{laughing}

We have a chance to study English only when we are in the primary school.

6th year of primary school.

3 year in secondary school, and about 3 an hour per week we cannot speak well.

Sometimes I see a foreigner who has a problem about traveling but I sometimes I want to try to help them ... may I help you or anything else

But if they come to me and ask me then I will show them but when it comes to talking to them I can't do that.

WPI: Yeah I understand where you are coming from with that. We had a Thai class for I think it was 12 weeks, two hours a weeks so when we try to go and order food and such we start pointing more often then we speak. So we definitely understand about you being shy about that.

We bring about 30 students to Chula each year and I don't know how large the faculty of arts department is or the English department is, but we were hoping that we could have enough people so we could all have some friendships on campus and if you know what we are like and what are culture is like.

Funny things we do and stupid things we do

{laughing}

CU: Can you give me an example?

WPI: What do you think A? {laughing}

An example. We have fun in our dorms sliding around in our socks and I'm sure you guys have similar things As Americans I have noticed one big difference. We have this sarcasm where we say something with the tone of our voice or the manner in which we say it is not really serious so I have run into a lot of issues where I'm naturally quite sarcastic and they may take me seriously and they will say how can you say that and I will say I am just kidding it is a joke.

I think exposure like that would be valuable for you and I'm sure that there are similar circumstances where exposure to you would be valuable for us. We just met A, Ning, and Noon, as a part of our old project and through them we have met other Chula students, and its just exciting that to know a few people and walk across campus and say hey I know you how are you doing? And so, along those lines we are also curious about what

activities do you think in your minds would be successful for bringing American and Thai students together to meet?

CU [pres]: I think absolutely would be camping {sec nods her head in agreement}

WPI: Camping.

CU [pres]: Yes this is a good idea. Because when we live together we can exchange many things for we can be together at most times.

CU [sec]: I think that we could go further than camping. Camping is very important and is much of help in a way and I think that camping is very important but you must remember that if you want to learn the culture of somebody you must get involved in their every day live and you want it to be instructional you must analyze what they think and the Thai way of thinking is very different from the westerners. We are not that logical for example, where something and you know where traveling and introduction of something and now conclusion and they are just rambling and I don't know how your project will be like but it would be better if you did something like 2-way communication, like you learn from and we learn from you. Something like that. If you want to be Thai in a way just like Thai people they just study abroad they might live with a host of that country and that may make them adapt to their surroundings.

WPI: Can you think of programs that might help push that? Or activities just ways for us to get together like, we met A through our project and we just naturally formed a friendship. We do things with him, we go out with him.

CU [sec]: I don't think that things have to be that concrete. You can here in Chula there is a club called foreign relations club and we can go to them and we can have the club organize some discussion or activity, something like that, where some Thai students guide the exchange students and they exchange the knowledge. It doesn't matter as long as the activity provides for a 2-way.

WPI: I have a question. Do you think most Chula students are aware that Suksit Dormitory exists? {laughing}
A is the only Thai person that I have seen in that dorm.

{Converse in Thai}

CU [pres]: Actually we know, but it is very far from the faculty. Is it true that you[A] live in the dorm?

WPI: He doesn't live in the dorm but he does come and visit us often. Aside from our guards he is the only Thai person I have seen at the dorm. {laughing}

A: I came for the beer. {laughing}

CU [sec]: As far as I know the people here, I mean, some people that come here everyday who have appointment or something here will know about it because sometime they may have to make a contact with some people there and whenever they organize something and they need students from other university then they go there. In general, people have no idea what that place is, when it comes to a dormitory they don't know. Its too far.

WPI: Yes. We walk to the library every day so we know how far it is. {laughing}
Can you think of any other ways in which to help to foster a closer relationship with Chula students?

CU: {thinking}

WPI: If we submitted to you, a request for certain activities would you be able to distribute it to different clubs and see who is interested and maybe help sponsor something?

CU[pres & sec]: Yes. Uh-huh.

WPI: Okay. One idea that has come up in interviewing our fellow students about how to better interact with you has been maybe having a cookout at Suksit maybe the first or second day we arrived. Would you be interested in going to that?

CU [pres]: If you want more students, then the dorm is very far and they won't go. I think you have to choose a central place to gather. If they walk and they see you there than I think they will have interest and stop.

WPI: Maybe Sasa International House would be a better idea? Or someplace even more central?

{converse in Thai}

CU [sec]: something across the road. {laughing}

[pres]: This building behind us.

WPI: Do you think from one meeting that many students will be interested in continuing to speak with us and interact?

{a lot of thinking from Thai students}

What we are trying to do is gauge a general interest if we were to take part in several activities somewhere in the center of campus where we could just have students join us do you think that 2 or 3 activities would be enough to get the ball rolling and then friendships would take care of themselves? We wouldn't need intense effort from Chula or WPI to keep saying you students be here and you students be here and talk to each other. We would like to be able to have a couple of events and then let things take care of itself and progress naturally.

CU [sec]: What kind of activity to do that?

WPI: Well, part of that would be finding out what activities you are interested in, finding out what kind of activities we are interested in and then looking for common ground. I noticed soccer is very big around here and
- maybe Thai versus Farang {laughing}

CU [sec]: I think that activities will create some relationship but you need a lot of propaganda and public relations have a big advertisement because in Chula not many students go to activities because the normal Chula student studies hard and aren't interested in activities so if you really want Chula student to get involved in this type of event you will need a lot of propaganda, and the subject of the event must be striking.

WPI: And what would be striking to a Thai student?

{conversing in Thai}

CU [sec]: In general, Thai people like anything entertaining.

[pres]: Maybe if it didn't... if it was for free.

[sec]: Yes. It would have to be free.

WPI: we feel the same way in the United States I'm sure {laughing} What we are hoping to do is present a set of recommendations to our university and to Chula about how to make closer relationships between the students. We have spoken with the assistant president of student affairs yesterday, we have spoken with Acaan Jirdsak and we have also spoken to professors from our university and it seems that there is a lot of interest among them with making student ties closer. So I guess we are the ones out here trying to get ideas on how to do that so if you have any other programs or any other activities that you think would be striking and you think we should present please let us know.

CU [sec]: Have you talk to the head of FRC, the Foreign Relation Club?

WPI: No we have not.

CU [sec]: I think, you know they run activity naturally for foreign students and its their direct responsibility. I think they should have some ideas about it. I'm sure they can make a suggestion like a movie festival, music festival. If you talk to some guy at the FRC upstairs and have you create some duty then there will be a strong relation with foreign students because it is their job.

WPI: Thank you very much you have been very helpful

CU : You are welcome.

WPI: Very nice to meet you.

CU [pres]: Who will you talk to next?

WPI: We will be meeting with a group of students tomorrow morning and then a member of the faculty of English tomorrow afternoon.

This year our project coordinator back in the United States is very anxious to foster a closer relationship with Chula and we had a joint project with A and two other Environmental Engineers which didn't quite work out academically, but socially it is fantastic. He was very excited to here about that and would like to see more of that in the future.

CU: I just want to ask you one more thing, when gather data you have to gather Thai students they will be helpful in communicating to Thai students.

WPI: All right, well, thank you very much.

CU: You are welcome.

INTERVIEW NUMBER 3

Date: Friday, February 16th, 2001

Time: 10:00pm – 10:45pm

Location: Chulalongkorn University – Presidents Building Fl. 7

Mrs. Charurat Tantraporn Assistant to the President of Chulalongkorn University

Dr. Jirdsak Tscheikuna

Samuel Tannatt Electrical Engineer, WPI

Jeffrey Cusato Electrical Engineer, WPI

ATTN: For this transcription Acaan Jirdsak will be AJ and the Assistant President will be AP . Both Samuel and Jeffrey will be referred to as WPI for they are the ones conducting the interview.

WPI: My name is Samuel Tannatt and this is Jeffrey Cusato and we are two students at Worcester Polytechnic Institute in Massachusetts in the USA. And we have a project center here, as I am sure you know or maybe not, and we come here every year for eight weeks and we stay at Suksitnives Dormitory and we have projects with the local community through the government through NGOs through anybody who feels they have projects for us. Now we do all for this for a project that we have at our university called the IQP. The IQP is basically our universities way of exposing us to the social side of our jobs as engineers. We interact with the community we conduct interviews and we get an idea of how are job as an engineer will have an effect on the real world when we get out, and so one of the highlights of the Bangkok experience, that WPI feels, is that it is so different culturally than the US, different language different foods different way of life and so they emphasize that in when the promote this program to the students. Four years ago a new professor took over as coordinator with the Bangkok project center, until then the only contact that we had with Chula was that we stayed here. Our professor is looking to have social ties socially with the WPI students that are here for eight weeks and the Chula students. So that the WPI students are enriched culturally and actually get into the way of life here so that the Chula students in turn understand what American culture is and its not just stereotypes from the movies or what not. So we're looking for programs and activities in ways in which we could promote closer social ties with the students from the two universities eventually we would like to have some academic relations as far as the projects go. We had a project this year with the Chula students which didn't quite work out academically but fostered closer relations between my partner and I and the students we were working with, we go out with them at night and on weekends and we feel that it has definitely been worth while for us and made our experience here that much more valuable to us and so we're seeking the opinions of the faculty and students here about programs that would foster a closer central relationship and we were hoping you could provide us with some input on whether you think Chula students would be interested in meeting with Americans, possibly would the partnership be advantageous to have meetings with, and also activities that both groups would like

AP: How about you just throw questions at me and I will answer them one by one.

WPI: Okay. First question is do you think that there are enough Chula students interested in meeting with Americans and having social relationships?

AP: I'm sure that there will be many students in the faculties interested. Since I was a student here we had been having groups of American students come here regularly. They come since I was student in faculty of arts and that was 30 or 40 years ago

AJ: Right now the latest numbers I gathered only 20 or 30 students, Thai students, going abroad for exchange program per year. Only about 20.

AP: Those students would be going by themselves. I think you will find no difficulty in getting responses.

WPI: Okay. We spoke with the president of the organization that is in control of the clubs, that oversees all the clubs yesterday. He suggested possibly meeting with the foreign relations club. They might be a group that is willing to promote our presence here and relay that to the students.

AP: Well the student club would be more concerned with the social activity. Now I suppose you would like it to be integrated into the classes?

WPI: No, not at this point. We are here with projects that have, for the most part, existed outside of Chula and right now we are trying to take smaller steps because we think that is the feasible way to do it. So first we would like to promote a social relationship and hope from that we could build an academic relationship as well.

AP: I think that that is a good idea. Now there are the clubs, including the English club where the student that are in the club are the people most interested in having contact with Americans. And I am not sure but in other faculties maybe not as interested, but in arts, you may already talked to some of us, the students would like a lot of contact.

AJ: You talked to the student yesterday in the student union and the student council.

WPI: Yes.

AJ: What did they say?

WPI: They said you would either want to go through the foreign relations club or go through an English club. The concern was that a lot of the students here have only had English in primary school. They maybe a bit shy about coming out and speaking to Americans.

AP: From my experience you may be coming here wanting to learn Thai but there are students here are wanting to learn English. So it is either one profiting, but not both. {laughing}

WPI: Yes. I have found a lot of conversations with me saying 'Sawatdii Kap' and them saying 'hello'. {laughing}

AJ: Our president is trying to push an exchange program mostly with US, Japan, and other country. Most of the student are graduate student that go abroad to do research. At least eight to fifteen in the faculty of engineering and the faculty of science some go to Canada and United States, master level or PhD level. We have quite a few student in bachelor level. At least one in the faculty of engineering and at least one in the faculty of science are going to the University of Washington for one year, they are third year, junior year, sponsored by *DOW Chemical*. That is two students, one from science and one from engineering, but that is still very limited number.

And we have very few foreign students coming from China. Most of the exchange student come from abroad. The faculty of arts has a large number, and economics. They have a very good relationship with the university in Japan. They have exchange student program with Japanese student staying here for two or three months.

AP: Now you are mainly engineering students, but you would like to or wouldn't mind mixing with students in other faculties?

WPI: Oh no not at all. Actually the WPI curriculum, we adopted a plan called the WPI plan in 1970 and it stresses the importance of making the students reach beyond just engineering. We are required to take humanities classes we are required to write a humanities paper, and the IQP itself is not something within our major at all. It stresses social interaction.

AJ: WPI is trying to make a human. {laughing}

WPI: It is a fairly new concept as far as engineering schools go, from what I have seen.

AJ: Here in engineering program the student also required to take at least 12 credit ours of social science.

AP: General education.

AJ: Civilization, something like that.

WPI: We have looked at the Chula webpage and we have noticed a lot of similarities between the schools thoughts on education and producing a human, as you put it, rather someone who has tunnel vision.

AP: Are you thinking as far as having students living with Thai families?

WPI: That had been mentioned yesterday by the head of the student union. He also mentioned, spoken about the Japanese exchange program and he mentioned that Thai students here that study Japanese get together with the exchange students and show them around Bangkok.

AP: I think that could be an option. I think the fact that you are staying at Suksitnives is good enough because you will be around here.

AJ: Plus, there is no curfew. {laughing}

AP: And its part of the campus.

WPI: What we did notice, and I was sure to ask the president of the student union yesterday, does the average Thai student know that Suksit exists? Because it is, and he did mention that it is certainly not the center of campus.

AJ: Even though the program has been being run for more than ten years it's hidden in the faculty of science. Not many people know that we have WPI students walking around campus.

AP: I not know.

AJ: I think from now on we are trying to promote this.

AP: In order to have more time to mix with students, just staying here is not enough you have to integrate.

AJ: I hear about your programs just last year through the last group I met. At that time, having said that I wouldn't have much time trying to arrange everything. Last year when I talked to your former coordinator who will be here next week, right?

WPI: Oh. Professor Weiniger. He is the current coordinator.

AJ: I did talk to him last year and although I didn't have much time and so I set up a little through email, but it was quite urgent. But at least we got something started. We'll hope that we will try to manage to get something.

AP: We need to get more interaction.

AJ: One of the big problems we have for a real exchange program is cost. We are trying to encourage Thai students to spend 6 months to 1 year abroad, but they must pay for it themselves. We are trying to get scholarships but otherwise they have to find sponsors, and unfortunately Thai students themselves are not rich. Anyway, we have a group of student every year with WPI coming and if we mix the two groups of students together and let you get closer to the student here obviously they would gain a lot, exchanging experiences of both sides.

WPI: Yeah, we definitely noticed that our experience here was made more valuable by meeting A, Ning, and Noon. They really brought us around and taught us a lot about Thai culture and we've eaten some very interesting food with them.

I certainly see from your perspective, well the students perspective, the financial barriers as well as going to the United States. In the United States I am lower-middle class average family and I come here and I can buy lots and lots of things. I can imagine what it is like trying to go the other way, but like I said, what we are interested in doing is fostering a closer relationship and we were curious if you had suggestions for activities that would do that? The president of the student union mentioned perhaps a camping outing and I don't think our school would be opposed to that. Currently our school sponsors a trip to Hua-Hin and to Chiang Mai so I don't think camping would be a problem. Do you have any other suggestions for activities?

AJ: Some sort of social meeting where you can all get together not too far where you can have a cultural exchange, maybe a short sport.

WPI: Yeah, we were thinking that soccer might be a fair sport {laughing}. We think that basketball might be a little to advantageous for us.

AJ: I don't know. I think you would be surprised.

WPI: Well, we have a few captains of their high school basketball teams currently on the trip. They play a few pick-up basketball games at National Stadium.

The goal of our project at this point would be to submit recommendations to both WPI and Chula...

AJ: Whatever it is you are doing I think is a good idea. You will talk to student this afternoon and I am sure they can give you the best way of how to promote programs for exchange students. I think I will ask Steve to have a group next year find out about how to promote an exchange program for Chula.

WPI: We can also make note of that in our recommendations. Our group thinks that a social relationship is really the best way to build a good academic basis.

I think professor Steven Weininger who has only been project coordinator for four years and in that time he has doubled the enrollment to the Bangkok program and he has implemented preparation courses. We have only had a Thai language course for two years now, and he started that. He started an official preparation course teaching us about the culture. If you have any suggestions of how you think in the United States we could have been better prepared for our experiences here, then we welcome them as well.

AP: When it comes to preparation, I think that there would be a culture shock.

WPI: I think it is going to be a culture shock for me going back to the United States {laughing}.

AJ: Not culture shock, but weather shock. {laughing}

WPI: That could definitely do it. We were told we would have culture shock when we arrived here and that every would be different and make you sick. I came into Hong Kong, actually, for four days before I came here and I have never traveled outside New England before that. The only thing that shocked me about Hong Kong is that all the menus were in Chinese, so I would just point to what I want. I got here and the attitude of the people and everyone here was so much more nice.

AP: Yes. I think the people here are much nicer than the people in China and also in Worcester.

WPI: Really. What was your perception of Worcester?

AP: It was unexpected. My daughter was happy their. She went to undergraduate and she stayed on for her graduate at Clark. She got accepted to NYU, but she wouldn't go. She liked her home.

WPI: Worcester is a city that is looking to revitalize right now. It was very popular in the earlier 1900s.

AP: My daughter read a perspectives in somewhere that Worcester was third largest or second or something and she was like this is the largest?

WPI: Well right now Worcester is the second largest city in New England, second to Boston. It is larger than Hartford, Providence, Springfield, any of those cities.

AJ: Compared to the size of Bangkok?

WPI: Its tiny {laughing}. Bangkok is bigger than anything I have ever seen, its huge.

AP: I think the students will benefit from both sides by mixing. Nothing is better than mixing.

WPI: Do you have any ideas in your mind right now of any activities that would get the students together for that? We were thinking that if we got students together once or twice next year, from that, friendships would just naturally form.

AP: I think you have gotten to the right channels. The clubs would be the best starting point they could have. Like having a welcome party for you. If you are not thinking in terms of academics then this is the place.

WPI: I mentioned to AJ, that a social relationship is a good base to build academic relationships off of.

AP: And I would think where the English club in the faculty of arts, if you contact, they could arrange for a party for you when you arrive. And some of the students are over there and wouldn't go to the central, but they would instead spread out in many directions.

WPI: Well, we would like to thank you very much I think you have answered a lot.

INTERVIEW NUMBER 4

Date: Friday, February 16th, 2001

Time: 2:00pm – 2:45pm

Location: Chulalongkorn University – Engineering Building #4 Fl. 10

| | |
|-----------------------|---|
| Pinjarus Pinsem | Chemical Engineer, Chulalongkorn University |
| Nikompon Prapaitrakul | Chemical Engineer, Chulalongkorn University |
| Uarporn Nopmongcol | Chemical Engineer, Chulalongkorn University |
| Samuel Tannatt | Electrical Engineer, WPI |
| Jeffrey Cusato | Electrical Engineer, WPI |

ATTN: For this transcription the Chula students will be referred to as the following: PP, NP, and UN respectively. Both Samuel and Jeffrey will be referred to as WPI for they are the ones conducting the interview.

WPI: So we are students from Worcester Polytechnic Institute in Massachusetts and we have a program at our school called the IQP, which sends students abroad for social interaction.

Introduction as UN arrives

All exchange greetings and are very glad to meet each other

We have a program at our school called the IQP which basically sends students abroad to have social interaction with different cultures so that we can see how are jobs as engineers have an effect on the real world, meet people we are dealing with and learn to deal with people. So WPI produces, as Acaan Jirdsak put it, “humans” as opposed to engineers. We have the perception of what is going on outside our lives. WPI has had a project center here in Bangkok for almost 12 years now. We come to Suksitnives Dormitory. We’re there for eight weeks. And WPI and Chula both expressed interest in having closer social ties between students so that our cultural experience in Bangkok is improved and the cultural experience of students here is also improved through exposure to Americans. So we’re basically looking for feedback, I guess our first question, is since you’ve been to the United States, did you find it hard to approach Americans to speak with them?

NP: I guess not. I went to the place with the exchange student, which is why I can talk to people easily. I will speak with them and they will speak with me. They think, I just exchange student so lets go talk to him.

WPI: And you?

PP: Well, I went there as a tourist and I had a chance to sit in at a high school for 1 day and it was very easy to talk to the others.

UN: No problems with me.

WPI: {nodding} No problems. How about your friends? We have been told by other people we have interviewed, that a lot of Thai students aren’t comfortable with their English and so they are withdrawn. So they don’t really want to approach Americans and speak with them. Well, they do but they hold back.

NP: I think it depends. Like all of us here, we are not afraid to talk to them but some maybe they afraid. It feels like, using English, which is second language not normal language, sometimes they like feel uncomfortable to talk but inside they might really want to talk to foreign people but sometimes they just, ‘do we have to speak English?’

WPI: I feel the same way when I have to use Thai {laughing}. I guess we are curious, how would you recommend that WPI and the students that we send here make themselves more approachable to Thai students? What can we do to make people more comfortable?

NP: People stay at the dormitory?

WPI: Yes

NP: If you want to approach Thai people you should just, like, go to or have some host family, something you go stay with them, go stay with the family, go stay with the students. Its, like, you can approach the family, approach Thai culture.

When I was exchange student, I have host family and they have three kids. And one kid have same class as I did. So it was very easy to get along with people he showed me, "this is my friend, this my friend..." and I think easier to get along with people in this way.

WPI: Do you [PP] have anything to add?

PP: The same. The same.

UN: I do not know if this is important or not, but I think about the host family, from my family. I guess if you stay with Asian family you dont have really good culture good view of life. They just drop you off at the university and then take up back to the house or maybe a little odd.

PP: So you would need a normal people.

WPI: And do you think we would be able to find normal people in Thailand that would be willing to take us on as.

NP: I don't think you would have any trouble finding a host family.

PP: And I think if you try to speak a little Thai then you make the Thai people feel more comfortable to talk to you and try to understand both languages. They would try to understand English and you would try to understand Thai. Makes easier friends.

WPI: You do a better job understanding English then we do understanding Thai {laughing}. WPI has a preparation course that we go through for 12 weeks prior to coming to Thailand. We have a Thai course 1 night a week for 2 hours, it's a Thai language course. And then we have another course that kind of introduces us to Thai culture and also introduces us to the writing techniques that we need to use for the project that we do while we are here.

You've been to America, you've had American friends, what do you think are the most important aspects of Thai culture that need to be conveyed? Or what would you tell your friends if they were coming here?

NP: Oh so like what they should know? What they should prepare themselves? Something like that?

WPI: like the culture, the language, the food.

NP: first about culture, Thai people like to be polite to each other. The younger must respect the older. The younger should not like go, 'hey how are you' to the older one. You cannot do that in Thailand. I think most Americans do not have a culture like this, right? {laughing}

PP: also, I think you,... Ahh... {speaks Thai} I am trying how to translate this into English. {having a lot of difficulty explaining this}Umm.. sometimes people get upset if.... we don't touch the head. It doesn't translate into English well but if you touch their head...

WPI: Due to the head being the highest part of the body. {everyone nods}

PP: Some of my friends do not know that. It might start some problems.

UN: For me, I think that with the girls, it's the men's attitude to girls. In Thai culture lady is like higher cant touch something like that you must be gentle to the lady.

You know, sometimes when, someone may not ask for help but if you extend a hand when they don't ask for help, is good.

PP: Also for female, you have to know that female cannot sit next to monk on the bus or something. We reserve the front seat to the monk. If no monk we can sit their but when they come you have to move and woman cannot touch monk.

UN: I think food. If you stay for month or two if you cant eat any spicy food then...
{interrupted}

NP: I think they already know that.

UN: Can you eat spicy?

WPI: Oh yes. Love eating in Thailand.

UN: Any problems living here?

WPI: Not being able to read the writing in the restaurants. A lot of pointing and finding out what you get. When we were talk how to speak a little Thai it was with English letters we cant read Thai letters but we can read English. We know the Thai numbers so that's about it for the letters. When I introduce myself we were taught to say "Yindii Thii die ruujakk" and everyone laughs at me because I guess it's really formal.

PP: Yes. Swatdii khrap is okay.

NP: You might want to get at least one Thai buddy to go around with you that would be easier and more informal if you get more Thai people.

WPI: On that note, basically our project here is to get a set of recommendations to the administrators of WPI and Chula about how to make closer social ties between the students and so we are interested in what activities we could offer that would be of interest to Thai people and American students so we could have some activities that could get some people together. We think that is what it is going to take is just getting people together to talk.

NP: Actually, if you are going to stay here for project for eight weeks, how about you come earlier... two weeks or one week earlier and then you can get your group for the project, which will include your American people and Thai people and then go somewhere like go camping, or go to some beach, or something like that. We like to hang out like that, that way we can get to learn more about each other. I think that good idea.

UN: For what months are you here?

WPI: We are here January and February.

UN: So you can participate in some special day like New Year.

WPI: Or the Thamisdad soccer game?

UN: {excited} Yes. {laughing}

NP: You went to that game?

WPI: Yes. We were the farang doing the Y-M-C-A during halftime. {laughing}

UN: So I think if you can get two months with special events or something like that.

NP: And traditional events.

WPI: Can you think of any classes offered here at Chula that might be helpful for us? Or could you think of something that maybe Chula could do with classes that they offer?

PP: Is the goal to understand Thai culture?

WPI: the primary goal is to understand Thai culture. So that when our school advertises this projects site to students its big idea is that it is very different from other project centers in London and Venice and all throughout Europe and south America, and this is well, we now have a project center in Hong Kong, it just started this year, but this is very different from anything else out there so there big rallying cry is that Bangkok

offers you exposure to a very different culture and with it what we would like to do is back that up by actually immersing you in that culture so that you can experience that culture as much as possible.

PP: We have Thai dance course, but I don't think {laughing}. Have you had a chance to sit in on a class on a normal class?

WPI: I have seen some of the classrooms I have been able to look in, but I actually haven't gone and sat down in a class. I think it's hard for us, from my knowledge, I think all the classes except the English classes are taught in Thai. We could understand maybe thank you but aside from that I don't think we would really know what is going on.

NP: The rest of the class is being taught in Thai.

WPI: Do you have any interaction with the English department or the faculty of arts here at Chula at all?

NP: We have language institute if you want to study English or take some English courses we go to there

WPI: Do they offer programs or do you think they would be interested in programs that push interaction with American students?

PP: Spoken communication.

NP: There is a class called spoken communication. They in the class they tell how to speak.
{interrupted}

PP: How to communicate in English.

NP: I think if you were to join this class it would be more interesting because...
{interrupted}

PP: You can meet many students. The class is not too interesting.

NP: The kids that take that class are willing to talk to you. It would be very interesting to you.

WPI: Is that offered right now?

PP: Yes. It is offered this semester.

WPI: I wonder if we could sit in on a class. It would be interesting.

NP: Students are many; engineering, arts, science.

UN: Sometimes you have to play in a drama and games.

NP: Like role-playing games.

WPI: I wish we had that at our school. {laughing} One of, we have been talking to we have 30 students here from our institute and we have been speaking with our fellow students and seeing what they would be interested in doing with Chulalongkorn students. Just increase contact and better cultural awareness. They mentioned an email type pen-pal program. Do you think that is something that students here would be interested in or is it more verbal communication and they are not as concerned with writing English?

NP: Write while you stay here or?

WPI: No. We would in preparation before we come. And that way we would when we arrive here we kind of know some people already.

UN: Is good idea. Very good idea.

PP: We have library access to Internet so I think it no problem for student here to contact you.

WPI: Do you think that students would be interested?

PP: Yes. NP: I think so.

WPI: Do you have any ideas floating around that you think we've missed. We're trying to reach cultural awareness. Have we missed anything? Is there anything we should do?

NP: Did you take classes before you got here about Thailand?

WPI: Yes.

NP: Did it help?

WPI: That is actually something we are asking our fellow students. I think it did help. We learned about some Buddhism and the monks on the bus and when you walk past a monk or an image of Buddha your head should be lower than theirs. But I don't know that we were prepared for modern Thailand. Our teacher who was here most recently about ten years ago and so a lot of what she said at least seemed like it was true. She said that all girls here wore skirts to their ankles and long sleeved shirts. {laughing from the Thai students}

PP: big city in the world is all the same. We are all the same. If you want to see what Thai people is really like you may have to go up, up in the country to see what they are like. Because we are here in Bangkok our lifestyle is not much different than the United States. We have the cable TV, have the Internet, have the car, have lots of things just like you.
If you can spend a few weeks up in the country it would be better.

WPI: We were in Chiang Mai for one weekend and we got to ride on elephants and lots of stuff I never dreamed I though I would do.

PP: Did you see the elephant kick the ball, play soccer?

WPI: No. {laughing} No. I got to drive my elephant that's about it. The guide got off and I got to sit on its neck. It was kind of cool.

Okay. Thank you very much for your time and meeting with us. You were definitely very helpful. It was nice meeting all of you.

APPENDIX B: CU INTERVIEW CONTENT ANALYSIS

| Theme | Specific | Interview # | Page # | Statement(s) |
|------------------|------------------|-------------|----------|--|
| Student Interest | | 1 | pg1-2 | "yes, definitely" "I think they realize that globalization, internationalization is quite important... the Thai students need to communicate" |
| | | 2 | | Yes |
| | | 3 | pg2 | "I'm sure that there will be many students in the faculties interested." |
| | | 4 | | Yes |
| Activities | study tour | 1 | pg2 | "Thai students can be your guides... but you can discuss something like social problems, social issues, and your culture, difference in culture... and they can take you to important places, tourist places in Bangkok, or the country" |
| | | 3 | pg3 | mentions the study / stay program that some Japanese students work with |
| | camping | 2 | pg4 | "I think absolutely would be camping" pres Because when we live together we can exchange many things - pres "Camping is very important and is much of help in a way and I think camping is very important but you must remember that if you want to learn the culture of somebody you must get involved in their everyday life" |
| | | 4 | pg4 | "...include your American people and Thai people and then go somewhere like go camping, or go to the beach, or something like that. We like to hang out..." NP |
| | host families | 3 | pg3, pg4 | "Our president is trying to push an exchange program mostly with US, and Japan, and other countries." AJ mentioned the Japanese exchange program and how that setup is an option "One of the big problems we have for a real exchange program is cost" AJ |
| | | 4 | pg2 | NP explains his own experiences of a host family from when he was in America UN points out that a host family may be a bad one, and they may just bring you to and from school everyday and nothing else "I don't think you would have any trouble finding a host family." NP |
| | faculty exchange | 1 | pg3 | asks us about the possibility of a faculty exchange program explains ?Junabunk? University in Australia and how a Thai lecturer from the faculty of art went to Australia to teach the intensive course Thai to Australian students. The Australian students went to Thailand to study Thai and live in the Thai community with a host family |

| | | | |
|-------------------|---|-----------------------|--|
| student exchange | 1 | pg3 | talks about the possibility of Thai students coming to WPI and taking a class from anywhere to a term to a full year "In order to compete with students from universities in Singapore or Malaysia it's important that Thai students need to have contact with students from America or Europe." |
| | 3 | pg4 | "One of the big problems we have for a real exchange program is cost" AJ explains how Thai students cant afford it and that there arent any scholarships set up to deal with international relationships |
| | 2 | pg2 | "Actually, our student here is interested about abroad... all student would be interested especially the student in the faculty of art because they have to study about the different language behind the department of English... I think this would be the perfect experience for them." |
| English Club | 2 | pg2 | [pres] mentions english club to talk to for the most interested in foreign languages |
| | 3 | pg3 pg2 | [sec] mentions that she is in faculty of arts and its normal for them to interact with foreigners "...the English club where the student that are in the club are the people most interested in having contact with Americans." |
| CU courses | 4 | pg5-6 | they make mention of a course called "spoken communication". the class itself is not very interesting but there are a lot of skits and you would like it because the people in that class are willing to talk |
| public activities | 2 | pg4 pg5 pg5-pg6 | mentions talking to the foreign relation department and setting up an activity with them suksitnives is too far from campus, they then suggest something more central tell us that the activity must be fun, have good propaganda, and be free. If it meets these requirements then people will probably stop in |
| | 3 | pg5 pg6 | AP suggests some sort of social meeting where we can all have a "cultural exchange", maybe a sport "I think the students will benefit from both sides by mixing. Nothing is better than mixing" AP |
| | 4 | pg4 | mentions coming on special days like New Years, or Thamisdad soccer match |
| | 4 | pg6 | talk of an email/pen-pal program and the availability of such a program they sounded enthusiastic about the idea and they explained that the library provides email and that many students would use it. |

Potential Obstacles

| | | | | |
|---------------------|---|---|------------|--|
| | most Thai students are uncomfortable with English | | | |
| | | 1 | pg2 | "we have what we call foreign affairs club and the debating team. Those students are quite fluent in English and they are comfortable speaking in English" |
| | | | pg2 | "I think the students who are interested in speaking with foreigners will." "...others who language ability is okay, although they would like to speak to you, the language would be the problem. They are afraid you won't understand them, but they are friendly." |
| | | 2 | pg3 | [sec] "In general, Chulalongkorn University students are not very open to foreigners and I think it is normal for a Thai student to have quite a limited ability to speak English." [pres] "... sometimes I see a foreigner who has a problem about travelling and I sometimes want to help them but I don't, but if they come to me and ask me then I will show them, but when it comes to talking to them I can't do that." |
| | | 3 | pg2 | NP "It feels like, using English, which is second language and not normal language, sometimes they like feel uncomfortable to talk but inside they might really want to talk to foreign people but sometimes they just ask, 'do we have to speak in English?'" |
| | WPI | 3 | pg4 | "Even though the program has been being run for more than ten years it's hidden in the faculty of science. Not many people know that we have WPI students walking around campus." AJ "I not know." AP |
| | culture problems | 4 | pg2 pg7 | UN warns that some host families just drop the students off at school and don't work well with the students PP "Big city in the world all the same."; "If you want to see what Thai people is really like you may have to go up, up in the country to see what they are like."; "If you can spend a few weeks up in the country it would be better." |
| | Suksitnives Dormitory | 2 | pg4 | [pres] "actually we know, but it is very far from the faculty" [sec] "In general, people have no idea what that place is...its too far" |
| | | 3 | pg4 | although it is not on campus both AJ and AP pointed out that it has a good location, it is still on campus, and there is no curfew which is more forgiving then staying with a family |
| Miscellaneous Notes | Chulalongkorn University students studying abroad | | | |
| | | 3 | pg3 | "We have quite a few student in bachelor level. At least one in the faculty of engineering and at least one in the faculty of science are going to the University of Washington for one year, they are third year, junior year, sponsored by DOW Chemical" - AJ |
| | | 3 | pg5 | AJ plans on asking WPI for an IQP that could focus on research for starting an abroad program |

APPENDIX C: WPI FOCUS GROUP TRANSCRIPTS

INTERVIEW 1

M) What did you learn in the Bangkok preparation courses about Thailand's culture?

A lot of really conservative stuff that's not necessarily true, or applicable.

Like....Thai people cross their legs...and point their feet at people, and it's not that big of a deal. Or Thai Women dress conservatively. hah. Riight (laughter in background) I don't think so.

We learned Thai! Which was definitely been more useful than anything else.
The Thai language course.... I think...

We learned about...the wai for the first time. Yeah and we learned it three more times after we got here (laugh)

Ah. We learned about the respect thing....

Yeah that was key.

Gai and Kai.... Moo (laughter)

It seemed that our.... ah our ID2050 teacher didn't really have enough background information about Thailand to be able to give us the information we needed

It would have made the experience more... well it would have made it better. It would have been nicer to have some of our questions answered that were applicable to Thailand, such as interviewing techniques....in a way...the , the cultural level of how to interview somebody in Thailand is so much different than the experiences of teaching the class.

well it's like... none of us knew what we were getting into pretty much. Except for 2 guys. (laugh) ummm.... but, it's like we didn't... we weren't told stuff, that once we got here we would have liked to have known.

Ah interviewing techniques, which caused (big) problems with our group.

And I think that ah we didn't have enough practice doing social research. Like the ID2050 was only half of what we needed in order to complete our project.

Ah, We did a lot of guessing about the rest.

The interviewing techniques that, that we were taught in ID2050, I feel that there were probably better methods that we could have used. For our own project.

Triangulation proved to be basically impossible. Due to limited time factors, and the fact that no one could really speak both languages...(cut off)

Umm but, we should have probably been told ahead of time more to concentrate on having... getting objective results. And.... making the objective results less dependant on an interview. And more dependant on first-hand experience.

...which proved 100 times more valuable

Our interview questions weren't specific enough and ah I think more practice in ID2050 would have helped. And emphasizing other things such as ah.... an interview is supposed to be done on a one-on-one basis. Cause we got there, we didn't understand that just interviewing in a large group would have been such a big problem. It was though.

So, we had to deal(?)... and it kind of made our results.... questionable (laughter)

Once again, in our situation, you couldn't have done an interview one-on-one even if you had an interpreter, just because it's not part of the culture. You know, we did the interview while we were sitting down eating, you

know after dinner, with everybody there, that's just the way they are...we couldn't have gotten the interview otherwise.

But we didn't know that till we got there.

They had people influencing some of the answers sometimes.

We yeah, we had people, like the translators would attempt to sort of interject their own... what they wanted to say...however...we actually picked up on it right away.

Luckily we knew enough Thai to know where to stop the translation, where they started adding their own to it.

Um. But we also sort of I think, during our first interview, when it started, we just... didn't throw our questions out, we threw some of them out, we recognized immediately that we wouldn't be able to use them for anything, but at the same time we also tried to concentrate a lot more, listen very carefully to what they said, and take what we could observe.

I think that the instruction was like...we had one day about interviewing, and then it was like, go read the book...and find out. And then since we didn't really think...we thought that after that one day we understood everything, we didn't read the book, and ah that hurt us.

And I think that part of the problem with the interviews was that...we didn't expect them to be as complicated as our interviews ended up having to be. And I think... mean, we took our interview questions to our ID2050 professor, and he like basically okayed them, even though they ended up being worthless...in our actual interviews. So I feel like, if he had a better grip on the information. I don't know. I don't know if he could have understood what information we were getting, better, or if he could have understood the cultural context of the questions we were going into better, to be able to give usyou know, better advice on what we were doing with that.

Of the books that we were required to read, one of them, would have been great fun to read in a philosophy class, but...

It was worthless.

Yeah, it was worthless for ID2050. and uh

And also for the IQP or Bangkok

Yeah.... I mean, it was good! Yeah (laughter)

Yeah exactly, um... It seems that we had one professor who was kind of involved with the entire trip that already had a context for where we were going. And that sort of (unintelligible) what we are trying to accomplish here. I guess. And maybe the Buddha book wasn't so appropriate as something....like, an, an interview book, just straight up.

As our ID2050 professor said that, every IQP has interviews, of some sort. But we spent... you know, 45 minutes, or an hour on interviews.

I think maybe they should have recognized, that getting in wasn't so difficult for.... I don't think any of the groups because we all had liaisons already, who would assist us with that part, you know, part of the thing.

Well, some of the groups had trouble getting in, we realize this, and some of the groups, like ours, it just came naturally because of the culture. So, they weren't prepared for that.

And I think back to the Buddha Book, like, that reading for ID2050, I thought, was basically worthless, I thought that that the way that we discussed, in Thai class, how Buddhism relates to Thai culture was far more effective, far more helpful than...I mean, understanding that in general. And reading the Buddha book, didn't, I didn't get... well, I honestly didn't read it, but.... (laughs) But I remember what it's about!

I read it.

I'd taken a class on Buddhism already, so I didn't really need to read it,

But, I don't think that knowing how Buddha lived, and that kind of thing was helpful at all to us. And I think that if we had a culturally...like, Buddhism in a cultural context better, with the Thai class, that would have been more helpful.

M) What surprised you most about Thai culture upon your arrival?

I had no idea of the size of the city really, and that was the first thing that hit me. Along that also, the chaos, and the fact that it's so just... (unintel)

I agree, it's just the size of Bangkok, is what surprised me the most. I was ready for the commercialism, the culture, or you know, here's your really big high rises, and some really low income...slum type people.

I was ready for that. But, the size, how huge it is...how much potential is here that isn't being used.... I wasn't ready for that. That and the tuk tuks.

Yeah the crazy traffic in general surprised me. But, I mean driving the wrong way down the highway was not very much fun.

I was surprised by how well I can get around speaking English to people who speak all Thai....

Never underestimate a good phrase book. Something, nobody ever suggested us to get.

I just wasn't prepared for everyone speaking Thai at me, cause I've been in the United States all my life, where I've known the language and everyone else hasn't. (laugh) And here, I mean, its like I got reversed, it wasn't like...it surprised me. (muttering)

I think I was prepared.... but um yeah speaking English to me (?)

I was pleasantly surprised by the number of people who could speak English... kind of... well, even if it is just recognizing certain key words that they've heard, on the TV or radio.

I was happy that they talk to us. Have fun with us, talking language...like we talk in their language, and they talk with our language.... it's fun.

I was surprised by how positively they react to saying one word in Thai. How suddenly you're no longer a farang. Yeah, a different level of farang.

In the United States, if somebody spoke English to us that was no too good, we probably wouldn't smile and be all happy about it.

M) What aspects of your experience in Thailand have been most culturally enriching, and in what way?

Well.... our group's trip

We went to a village. We lived there for 6 days.

Ahh and it was like, it was like becoming a part of their village, their family we hung out with them.... we drank whiskey with them, and ah.... even though they.... they knew only a little bit of English, we still.... we still leaned to communicate and have a good time. And the surprising thing about the village is that, they are really poor, running out of rice.... they had a rice shortage, but yet, they just kept giving us stuff, and they were so hospitable to us, and here we are, trying to give them money and they're like no, no no no... but, it's like nothing to us, like 100 Baht, but to them.... it takes them a long time to raise that kind of money.... So that was just like a really shocking experience for me. You guys got anything to add to that one?

I think that not just in the villages, but when we were in a larger town, we were with somebody who spoke almost no English, and we had an awesome time trying to learn to speak Thai, you know? And we would try and teach her English, and I think that kind of experience, where you forced to learn, but I think it's far more effective that any of the classes we had, or Thai phrase books or whatever, I learned more Thai then, and I remember more of it than I do from anything else and... visiting the villagers, I think, was a completely unique

experience for all of us, something that we'll probably never forget and we're really looking forward to going back.

One of the things that I noticed the most, I mean, I shared their experiences and it had the effect on me, but then, when we went to Chiang Mai, and we went to those villages and we slept overnight, in a real hill tribe village in northern Thailand, it almost made me sick, to be so close to how commercialism has affected the way of life for these people, to the point where their way of life is setting out a mat... full of trinkets that don't have any application to their culture at all, just stuff that looks nice, and they try and sell it to these people who are spending money to stay overnight with them and it's all.... like Americanized, or Westernized, its just not the real thing and it made me really sad.

Oh yeah... and I think completely different from the experience that the rest of the group had in Chiang Mai... like, it was totally different for us than it was for them.

Well the elephant ride was cool

Well, yeah!

Yeah it was like we could see the culture that they had, cause we had already been in the real part of the culture, and we could kind of see what they still had, and we could also see all the effects that the hiking trekkers or whatever, had on the people, and it was blatant that their culture had been changed by it...and that they were catering towards tourists and so much of what they did, it wasn't their culture anymore. I mean, singing bad American songs, Christmas songs...

They're not ever Christian

Yeah, it's just disappointing.

It's hard to escape tourism around the world these days.

That's true. I think we were all just lucky to be able to be in a village that wasn't touched like that... or be in three villages

M) What were aspects of Thai culture that you thought you would experience, and did you then experience them?

I was prepared for the mass selling of things and the cheap prices...I know it sounds weird, everyone was all shocked that you can get oakleys for 200 baht and all sorts of crazy little trinkets, but I was sort of expecting that.

I think that culture shock experience...I'm not sure that culture shock is sufficient. Coming here and then getting picked up by a tuk-tuk, my first day here, who took me around and then coming home and just being shocked that this is a really different place. And that was one of the things that was hard added to the fact that I spoke little Thai... something that really shouldn't surprise me and then happened again when we went to the villages...I think these guys like, told me to calm down a lot, cause I was just...I was just so surprised at...where we were, and what we were trying to do, that...I went crazy a little bit.

I don't think that you associated culture shock with being a bad thing, though...I feel like I expected culture shock to be difficult to deal with...but actually it was far more exhilarating than anything else...like we'd go to these places and it would be such a crazy experience that it'd be hilarious...and, I mean, I haven't ever been upset by anything that I've experienced so far, I mean like culturally.

These two.... can prove to be an embarrassment on occasion! During interviews, cracking up laughing going (weird noise)

But you can deal with it by...

It's their way of dealing with the sheer magnitude of what we're doing.... all of a sudden it hits ya, and you're like...I am talking to the village elder...of a village that takes 3 hours to hike to after you drive for almost half a day after flying out of the city for 2 or 3 hours... You know, it takes a long time to get here, I'm sitting here

asking them how we can help them...and they're telling us! And we don't speak their language; They are telling us what it is that they need from us, and we're telling them what we need from them and all of a sudden it just hits you, and you don't know how to respond, because you still need to finish the interview, and you know, drink the whiskey, so...

M) Do you think that the background you received as part of the preparation courses contributed to your cultural experience?

A little bit...

Thailand is in South East Asia...

They speak Thai here...Bangkok is the capital...

I learned probably like one eighth of our Thai knowledge that we're using right now

Really, that much? (yeah) well maybe it's because I paid really no attention, but...

I think that some of it has...it gave us sort of a one-sided perspective of Thailand, that is applicable sometimes, in a very limited way, but it still gives you a general idea of what's going on...when you get here, you get the other 99% of Thailand, and I don't think there's any other way you can get it, I mean I don't think there's a whole lot of stuff you could do to tell somebody what Thailand is like. I mean, they even say something, you know whatever booklet or whatever that was, but when we go back and try and explain how everything is to people, they're not going to understand, not going to want to listen, because it doesn't make sense. So much of it is completely different that you just can't communicate it half the time. Like, if I tried to explain to someone why I burst our laughing in the middle of an interview, with a woman who tried to speak Japanese to us, (laugh) I don't really think I could.

About the preparation though, it was Thai language and culture...and we were forced to talk to this person who was Thai....and that was a little taste of what we were going to get here.

I dreaded that class.

Yeah, cause I had to like, face that woman! And she would talk to me!

She would call on you, and you would not know the answer, or you would sound stupid.

I loved ID2050 just cause...I was completely comfortable with being there...there wasn't anything he could throw at us that I couldn't handle

But here, like that's what happened to us, you all of a sudden you just jump in a taxi....

But it was fun here!

You guys really didn't like the language course, more than ID2050?? (looking wildly about)

I liked them both about the same. I mean, I liked the teacher we had for Thai....it was fun

Yeah she was nice

ID2050 sucked! I'd be called on by the professor, and he's be looking at me, I mean like...What do you want from me!? Stop looking at me! And there's the fact that he could call you up at any time and make you present in a minute on something. Didn't that bother anyone?? I lived in perpetual fear! And, then like with our Thai teacher it's more sort of a relaxed atmosphere....like I could force myself. Like, I raised my hand, forced myself to speak Thai... attempted to learn, and failed miserably.

You guys...you guys like ID2050 more?

I like being there more, and got more out of the class.

I don't like learning languages in that environment...I mean, I like submersion better. I did Spanish for 5 years in high school, and I didn't enjoy the class, I think submersion sort of stimulates (?)... and I learned so much more Spanish. I don't learn languages well under fire. I probably got a C-, the lowest grade in the class just cause I don't learn that way you know. So I didn't enjoy being there. It's a personal thing

You're saying you like immersion? Or no...

Yeah that's what I meant.

What is submersion?

Pretty much the same thing. Only it's under water.

You need like a start, somewhere to start (I agree) and then by immersion, you know, you can go from there

Yeah. Yeah even just...I mean...I'll admit that I wasn't the best Thai student, but I did learn sawat-dii khrap, and that's something that Thai people recognize....and they value it, and they do that, so...it's you know, all the little things, that we did learn, even if only a tiny bit of it stuck, it still stuck, and it helped.

A lot of the little things, just the way I mean... I think we were taught formal Thai, and people here don't really speak formal Thai. She...the teacher even indicated to us that there are different levels of speaking Thai...and I think she probably taught us at a level that was a little bit too high. Not what people normally speak.

Like yip. Took me a while to figure out yip

Yeah. (researchers look confused) Like yee-sip? Yip. Yip-et.... yip hah!

Little phrases would have been maybe more helpful around here. When we say hi to people. Thank you...and you know little stuff

I feel much more comfortable witnessing it in the actual environment.

M) Do you have any recommendations, or suggestions for the Bangkok preparation course that you feel would enhance the cultural experience of future students?

I think that the dinner we had, with the people that came last year was really helpful. I think...I feel like I gained a whole lot about what to expect. More from that than from the other classes we took.

The more interaction with Thai people I think would be best. We're lucky, I mean we got to go to a village, and we got to interact with the villagers which was really cool but, I don't know about what other people... (trails off)

Maybe some kind of mailing list could be made where like.... or, it doesn't have to be a mailing list, it could be like you know, like a news group or whatever, where we could post questions to the people who went last year. So we wouldn't have to be so actively harassing them and they might be more apt to write a paragraph or something, for us... and I know there are a lot of Thai students at WPI that I talked to before I came and learned a lot from them too, and I don't know if they could like, help out with other people, but...

I think that we needed ... well, I think I needed to be a better write before I tried to write this proposal. That wasn't an IQP fault though, that was my lack of preparations... I feel like as we've gone, the advisers have kind of changed some of what they want from different sections. And I...that could just be because our project is changing... but I feel like some of it is just general structure.... Like if we had a good idea of like each section and what each section was going to include, we wouldn't have been redundant, or ended up leaving out stuff that needed to be in certain sections. I think maybe a good outline of what the IQP is supposed to look like before hand. Did we ever get one? Did I just completely overlook that?

We did. Kind of got one...But, it wasn't very good.

Yeah, wasn't very specific I didn't feel like...

Like a whole model of a project that got an A. One that never existed, but would have gotten an A.

They're in the library.

No, I don't think it needed to be a whole proposal, I just think an outline, saying, this is the type of stuff that goes in the methodology, this is the type of stuff that goes in your results and not in your methodology.

That was day one...that was day one of ID2050

It was on a piece of paper that they told us we should read, and we stuffed it in our notebooks. And now we're pulling it out saying what?

I guess if there did do something like that, then more of an emphasis on it could have been good. Cause I had no idea there was an executive summary, I didn't you know... we ended up putting some results stuff in our methodology, because we just didn't know, or I at least didn't know there was a results and analysis section...so...

I could have read a book about it.

About IQPs?

heh I don't know that we would have actually read it

Next years IQP is to write a book on how to do an IQP.

M) Given a chance is there anything you would have done differently at the beginning of C term to enrich your cultural experience?

I just wish I had more time. If I had a weekend to check out more of Thailand

Yeah, I definitely would recommend to everyone, that's why I came as early as I could, and I'm leaving as late as I can, so I'd have the most time while I'm here, cause you don't get to come out to Thailand very often

I came here as late as I could, and I'm leaving as early as I can, and I haven't been to a temple or anything. Other than the two organized trips, I've hardly been anywhere

I'd like to be able to see more of the sights, but I haven't had the time, I don't think I've had a Sunday off since the very first Sunday...and I just....went to MBK

M) Same question, but beginning of B term?

I don't think there was anyway you could have known what was coming at us...the beginning of B term.

There were a couple of things we would have liked to have had in our literature review had we had know that we would want then like...any studies on the education of rural Thailand. But you know, there is none of that, so... it wouldn't have gotten anywhere

Better education about malaria. They proved that all malaria medication, which I spent a lot of money on, is worthless

Yeah I think that a lot of...I feel like everybody got a different piece of advice on what medication to take and what shots to get, and I think that maybe if they had some general guidelines from WPI about, you know, what is the general shots you get before you go to Thailand, before you go to....or whatever.

They did, but they weren't all completely necessary.

That's cause the list is from the CDC and not from the malaria research Inst of Thailand, that's the problem

Yeah.

They recommended Japanese encephalitis...I mean, we all found out from each other that we didn't really need it.

One thing I would have liked to know: yeah I know, it takes a while...I would have liked to be explained a lot more thoroughly...if someone had told me what an idiot I was for taking the courses I did B term. I took 2... I wasn't expecting it to be more than any of the other ones, and I wish I'd chosen Bio for boobs...volts for dolts, something like that.

I talked to people who had done an IQP before.... and I think they recommended to us
But you don't listen! This is the thing!

I did. My other classes were blowoffs.

Good for you!

Maybe it was because I took 2 other difficult classes, I never found the PQP to be difficult at all. I mean it was time consuming, but....other than putting up with you guys I never thought it was hard. I mean, what did we do? We wrote some papers based on some stuff we read.

Which we haven't used at all

Yeah we can't wait to read the first draft of our methodology again and laugh our asses off...

I had 3 EE classes, that were 3000 and 4000 level....and I dropped the 4000 level one.

I think time consuming. That's the thing, man. I ran out of time in B term to do anything. If I ever see that library again...

Burning it down!

M) Do you feel that interaction with CU students could enhance you experience in any way?

Yeah I think that it would have . I think that most of the best times I've had here in Bangkok have been with Thai people. And it's just because...they live here, they know all the good places to go.

I mean, just in general....even with our Thai friend, he showed us around, he took us to restaurants and stuff, and that was fine, cause he knew good places to go, and he had friends that knew how to show us a good time and stuff... and that was really helpful for feeling like I could do something besides work here.

I'm not sure about...the projects...with both Chula and WPI students were good cultural experiences. (If they were done in a proper fashion) yeah if they actually were good projects

Make it clear to a liaison what an IQP is. Sometimes it doesn't seem to be clarified clearly enough...

Culturally...I don't know...I think that any interaction, more interaction with Thai people, Chula students is good, and having projects related.

That was a good idea, and we should do more of that.

At the same time, your questions have all been our cultural experience, not IQP experience, bridging society with technology and all that. And I think that interacting with Thai people will increase our experiences, you know culturally and all that, but I haven't really spent all that much time with Chula students, so I don't know, how it'll affect them and all that.

I think that it would definitely improve the IQP experience cause I feel, and maybe this is being too optimistic, but I feel that any interaction with other Thai students would definitely help you adjust faster, would help you to be able to be more effecting with the work here. I mean even just little stuff, like translating...you can have them look at a Thai website while you look at an English one, little things like that would benefit you, rather than having to worry about finding a translator, or having someone read it to you.

Going to bars...eating, clubbing...the movies, bowling...all the stuff that they know the best places to go and we don't.

M) What do you think could be done to enhance interaction between WPI and Chula students before/after we left?

A soccer game between us and Chula students. That would have been a blast. We'd get our asses kicked. Then we could take them on in basketball game. A soccer match, and then basketball.

No, baseball! Yeah. Heh softball.

Something like email interaction before we left, you know, get to know them before we leave.

I think if they understood our English well enough, there are a lot of things we could have asked them. About the social scene and stuff you know. Everything like, where can we exchange money to where can we eat, what's in the area that we live in...you know.

Well I think that some people, invariably always love to talk to other people like that, and other people it maybe isn't their thing. They do it once, and then they stop...but that doesn't mean that you shouldn't try...

Also requires that they email us back...

I'd talk to em about American culture

I love answering questions like that, I think it's cool.

Maybe being paired off with some Thai person isn't the best idea. Maybe something like a web forum...that you can only get on with a password. Just some....like only open to WPI and Chula students or something.

Or maybe if it were a little more group oriented, there wouldn't be so much pressure to feel like you had to go on a date, or go out with just this one person, I know Thai people don't like to do that.

Play takahw! (wicker ball)

Had some sort of welcome WPI students to Chula.... in our honor.

It seems kind of weird to me, because for our project, Chula's been pretty much basically a useless resource. I mean their library books are a little bit out of date, at least the ones that are in English. No big deal. but I mean, it seems we come all the way here, and the only purpose Chula is serving is they are cheap housing for us and a place for our professors to stay too.

And we can say we're from Chula.

Yeah exactly! I mean, I wish we were more involved with the university on another level I guess. Like...it seems more like they are just sort of accommodating us as exchange students.

I'm not a big fan of being forced or shepherded into a situation... Like, the Chula game was really cool and stuff, but it was sort of like we were told by someone that we would love it there, and then we show up and all of a sudden...I....I mean, I got into it and all, but it took me a few minutes. And I wish that like, like we could treat the school more like we treat WPI, it's not just a place, it's part of... our reason for being here. Our host. I mean, they're called out host university, but right now they're our host dormitory. (yeah) Yeah and again, if we'd had more of a.... if we had developed some kind of relationship, even with a small group of students, like, they could do stuff like go.... go to.... they could have gone to soccer game with us, and they could have told us at least what those ludicrous float were about or explained some of the little cultural subtleties that none of us understood. I mean, the only thing I really remember from that soccer game, at the end with those little car shows or whatever? A woman behind me started telling me about that...I was like, I learned more then than I did the watching any of the soccer game, and I even asked her about the floats, and she told me something about that. So, I guess having...even if you are just thrust into a situation with Thai people, you learn more that way that you do with any other method. You learn more with experience than being told about it.

It might just be weird to...it might be hard to do that... you know, force us into kinda social situations with the Chula students... I'm not sure how that would work. It depends on how willing they act, like how willing they are to do this kind of stuff, like show us around they might now want to do that.

Yeah the last thing you'd want it some Chula student, like hand-selected by Chula and told okay you are going to deal with them....it'd have to more of a voluntary thing on their part, voluntary thing to give us a tour... like, there are some people...who just like... like a certain guy who asks too many questions all sometimes and likes to be by himself, and not really eat... food of a Thai nature... he wouldn't want to be involved in this thing, that's his thing.

INTERVIEW 2

M) What did you learn in the Bangkok preparation courses about Thailand's culture?

The most important thing was respect, in terms of people don't really talk [unclear]. I've definitely noticed it. If you're on a subway and stuff, people won't really be talking, and if there's of whole bunch of us, we'll just be talking and the whole thing and just really loud... so just respect.

Mai pen rai. Which has definitely been enforced here. Um...playing into the respect, respect of people that are older than you, people that have a higher position than you in society...

... other than that it was just like.... nothing, nothing outstanding. But actually another thing, is ah.... about the religious.... religious influence, and [unintel] that part of their cultural about how religion is so.... so built into everything. It definitely is reflected, like every house has a spirit house. And once, actually, I saw a woman handing food to a monk... she was careful to not touch him or anything, just put food in a bag. So that was reflected.

And the respect of the King I've noticed a lot.

And in movie theatres, you have to stand up.

Yeah, like along the lines of the respect things. I mean, I did sorta notice it... but it doesn't seem like...especially in terms of the little kids and the elders, I don't notice that, it seems like they're just as rambunctious as kids anywhere in the world. Well, of course I haven't seen it all, but just based on what I've seen....course maybe that just tells you what I haven't seen I don't know...

I was expecting not to see just from the description that we got...not to see as many.... farang here. And then we got there and it seems pretty much just like any other city. You didn't notice so much... I thought it would be really different from like NYC at home. But it doesn't seem to me that it is... except for the tuk-tuks.

I totally agree with that, it's ah, it's just another city.

M) What surprised you most about Thai culture upon your arrival?

I think that most is just general friendliness is so much higher, especially in the city. Any city in American , people are just like.... not necessarily jerks but they're just so more... than here. Like, even when someone's trying to sell you something, and you know they're trying to sell you something, they're nice about it and they...you they kind of make jokes for us...you know, it just makes you feel a lot more comfortable. Just a lot more inviting, like open-minded to foreigners. Like, in the United States, there's kind of a certain... looking down on people that are trying to make a living in our country, who don't know our language and stuff like that.

I think that...people here are a lot more accepting, of other people, and they're not as self-centered. At least that's what impressed me a lot. That, they seem to be a lot more willing to go out of their way to help other people, and not be so tied up in what they're doing....that they just don't even notice.

I don't think it's something that you have to be prepared for really...it was like a pleasant surprise...but, I didn't know what to expect. I mean, I guess they were kinda saying the people were more friendly, so yeah I did sort of expect it...but I didn't know really that they'd be that degree of difference about it... [?] people are enthusiastic about you know,

M) What aspects of your activities in Thailand have been most culturally enriching? In what way?

For me, it was definitely Chiang Mai...I think it might have been a little bit more of a tourist trap that I thought it was going to be, but even still, it was really cool, like seeing villages, and everything.... so yeah, that was definitely the most enriching thing, culturally. Their way of living... well, not completely different, the most different I've ever been exposed to.

I agree...the Chiang Mai. I think that...any time that you interacted with people who are Thai, and grew up here like any interaction that's only with them, and doesn't necessarily involve other students from here, or ...just conversations with them, that's been the enriching part, regardless of where...the location of the conversation was, just that they're really willing to explain stuff, and you can ask anything you want, and from that make it the most enriching.

Not just conversations, just seeing how the village was set up and everything. Even though it wasn't radically different from how we lived, I mean... well I guess it is. I don't know how different it is I guess. Guess maybe I'll have to go back there more. It was definitely the most enriching...it's not just like a real city...but it is just like a city. That's actually, one of my best impressions. Like, on of the things they said, especially from Siamese Tragedy, they really give you the impression that this place is a hole...and they do! They really make it seem like a dump in some places, and I haven't really seen that at all. You know...it's not completely clean, but it's just as good as any other city... of course I haven't seen all of the city yet, so there are probably some good parts, some pad parts...

I think it challenges... or, that coming here has challenged. Like when I read the book, the idea that I came up with were just... so... they're not very good at all. So, when I came it was kind of surprising, so it was Oh, like this isn't so bad... I though I was coming from some place so much better, and I don't think that that's really true in that everywhere has it's advantages, it's disadvantages... and from talking to people that, I don't know... they seem happy so... But they told us that everyone what going to be happy, so

I would say the books were not misleading, cause I didn't completely trust it just... just cause you a book tells me something I don't believe it so... I don't necessarily discredit it, but I don't take it as that's definitely the way it is...but... I only read half the book, so maybe I'm missing part of it.... but the impression I got from the half I read was that.... Thailand is real dirty, and stuff like that. But, yeah I still wouldn't expect that too much... Well you know, I just think the book was just kind of focusing on the bad things. I kind of defended Thailand, like in my head. I'm sure it's not like that, at least not where we were.

I didn't get that much out of Siamese Tragedy.] So I never... never really applied what I learned there.

Even the title...I mean, the make it sounds like a tragedy! And it's not a tragedy. Not to say that some horrible things haven't happened here, but still. (it was a tragedy) yeah that's true. And because that was the focus of the book.

I think that the picture that the book gave me, it's being so much worse than what I actually encountered, kind of... I don't know if...I don't think that I was looking forward to encountering what the book gave me in my head, but when I got here, it was almost like being not let down, bit I was disappointed that it wasn't as different as I thought it was going to be.

Yeah I totally agree with that

Cause I came here, and I was like Okay, there's going to be culture shock... umm where'd it go? I was like, okay well maybe not. I don't know, maybe it just hasn't hit me yet.

I'd say I'm a little disappointed that I haven't experienced culture shock, cause that's kind of what I...came here for, but I should have known since I stayed in the city. Matter of fact, I should have maybe picked my project somewhere outside...

Yeah that's what I was thinking when I got here. I was like oh, I'm not going to get exposed to anything here... cause this is like being in New York, but at the same time, I think you do get exposed to stuff. It's kind of like, when, I lived I Miami, and that was the same form of culture shock, like going in and being a minority in a different cultural area, so I though that coming here was going to be different, but it wasn't so much. So, I think that if I had picked something outside, I would have gotten more of what I came to Thailand for. But, still have gotten quite a bit, so that's fine.

M) what were aspects of Thai culture that you thought you would experience, based on what you learned in your preparation courses? Have you experienced them?

Friendliness, and yes.

Yeah.

I thought that we were going to get more of a.... not a stereotype as being Americans, and therefore we would be like... I don't know. But there're supposed to be so nice, that the stereotype wouldn't necessarily come across...but I can't find any sense of that, except that it people... I don't know. Nevermind, that didn't make any sense!

Actually, yeah that's one thing that I expect, that I think I see, I don't know, but I definitely feel like people are taking advantage, especially when you're haggling for prices, I definitely feel like people are taking advantage of you, cause you're foreign and don't know what the prices are really supposed to be... Like I bought a CD player in MBK, and I'm not even joking, she was definitely laughing at me as I was walking away. They definitely, she definitely... overpriced me on that thing... but I don't know, maybe they're just like that to everybody of course, I don't know.

I thought I was going to see a lot more active Buddhism. Like, you see the spirit houses and everything, and....I guess it's my fault cause I haven't gone to a lot of wats, but I thought I was going to see more or maybe hear more about Buddhism from Thai people, and I haven't really, except for maybe the tour.... guides....

I hear a lot about religion... and I don't know if that's just because there are so many kinds of religions, or if that's just the way Americans are.... I don't know. But I thought I was going to get a better idea of Buddhism by coming here. And, in retrospect, I don't think that I would get a better idea unless I specifically researched it.

Yeah like the philosophies of Buddhism don't really, it's more...like the religious influence here is like strong, but it's not necessarily directly Buddhism ... it's like spirit houses and things like that, that's not really Buddhism, that's just like their own aspect of.... (offering to ancestors) yeah it's like spirits and stuff like that, and that's not really a teaching of Buddha so much.... you know, he didn't really focus on that stuff, it was more like how to live really....

When I was talking to my Thai friend, about Buddhism, and the spirit houses, and he's like you offer them stuff or you put whatever out when you would like when you were dead.... cause it's like to your ancestors and stuff. And...they say it's getting away from worldly possessions, and yet you're putting stuff there that you like, so...I don't...

Yeah it's like you give offerings when good things happen to you like... I don't know I guess I'm not making a judgment cause I don't really know all that much...but, it seems contradictory.

I think that learning more about it directly in Thailand, as opposed to that book about Buddha, it was just about Buddha... and it was a cool book, and I actually just enjoyed it...but, like I said, just the general principles are hard to tie in...so I'd actually like to learn more about like specifically the way it's done here, with the spirit houses and stuff like that, back home. Well, actually more in the Thai class, than ID2050. I think that's actually be a cool thing in Thai class. Maybe even tell like how to make an offering. Cause I was just thinking about it, it might be kinda cool...cause I see people at MBK, you know the spirit house there, just like giving flowers and incense and stuff, if I could do something like that it might be kinda cool... but I don't know

Although there is no real way to do it wrong, it's pretty much.... but still, still you know you don't want to... but if they could tell us, if there's like a routine way.... I think that'd actually be kind of cool to do in Thai class. I would have liked someone to explain, or that we could discuss the Buddha book with... who actually was, Buddhist maybe? Because I can understand that they want us to learn it on our own, cause it's like the whole WPI thing, but learning it without really any... I don't know, I think supplementary material from our Thai teacher would have been good. And, the question and answer periods in her class I guess could have been more.... like it's good to let us ask random questions but I think she could have led some guided discussions about the material we covered, and the books and how that applies here. And I know that that would only be her opinions, but there are more Thai people at WPI than just her. There are Thai students from Chula and other places that are at WPI that... I don't know if they'd mind, coming in, but they could participate in like cross cultural discussion about it.

I think the former Bangkok project center coordinator coming in more would have helped.

Yeah. Cause he kinda helped with the whole Siamese Tragedy thing in....which was good.

That and I think he kind of shocked us all a little bit.

Yeah, I think that the Thai language class shouldn't be just a language class, it should be language and culture.

I think that language, I mean we have to use... there was no need to get that in depth with the language.... cause when you use whole sentences in Thai here, they assume you speak Thai and try to talk Thai back to you...just thank you, please, all that stuff... I think it would be good to learn that kind of thing, before actually...(How to order food) yeah, how to order food. Like, taxi directions, they didn't do anything about taxi directions. Just useful stuff, you know like useful phrases

I wish it was more culture class than language class, so that ID205 would be more about like, social science, interviewing and stuff like that, which it was, pretty much, you know
I wouldn't change that, I think make the Thai class just about Thailand itself, not just the language, maybe some history and stuff would be kind of cool.

M) Do you have any recommendations or suggestions for the Bangkok preparation courses that you feel would help enhance the cultural experience of future Bangkok project center participants?

I would say... having a monk come in would have been great.... and having more in-depth discussion, this is what I said before, of the books, and of the culture, and maybe having Thai students.

Yeah having Thai students, I think there are more resources that could have been pulled into it.

I don't think there's much that you need to do to prepare us, culturally...

I would say... less of... teach them how to give directions. That'd be nice (yeah). I think that maybe a better explanation of the resources that are around you.... it's maybe not part of the preparation courses, but like what you have when you get here, for the one or two people who get here first, who don't know how to go about anything, and aren't as adventuresome But I don't know. Giving them a general idea of... possibly a map of the area just around the dorm, and they could even teach of directions on that, that would apply to us...

I think they should emphasize in the class, what the schedule is going to be like, in terms of the project when you go away, cause I'm wishing now that I did more stuff at the beginning of C term, just cause when I got here, I was just like oh I'll be quiet, relax.... I got 2 months but now I don't really have a lot of time to do anything

I think that they could have had us all meet together as soon as we got accepted... just so that if there were people who wanted to go to Hawaii, or wanted to go to Vietnam, they would have a chance to talk about that and make plans before. Cause I know that I didn't really know anybody that was coming before we came, and you buy tickets in August, you don't really know anything about what's going on.

I think that they could tell us where to go, I don't expect them to organize anything, but they could tell you possible places to go.

Yeah it's like, you're going halfway around the world, I think that they would want you to optimize your time you're over here.... so like places in Thailand

Places along the way, like places that people have gone, asking other students...

I think that having the reception with the students who came last year, like we did it after we'd all bought plane tickets, so they told us about Thailand.... but I know, for a fact, that some of them went placed other than Thailand, and really liked it, if they had those students talk to us, before we even had bought plane tickets, so we would have had an idea of what other people have done, what we potentially would have liked to do...

we could get some kind of an idea on what we're doing.

I think it would have been nice to have people here, that could... like guides to Bangkok. Maybe Chula students, or something like that. Who could take us around. Also it would give us contact with people... Yeah, the only reason that I wasn't completely at a loss is because I knew a Thai student from home, so.... but he was like my guide for the first week and a half or whatever. And after that, I was comfortable enough, so that I was like oh! I can go explore now, this is fine. (yeah) But, I don't know - until you adjust to the fact that the culture is safe, and you're not going to get, you know.... until I was convinced of that fact, I wasn't really willing to go anywhere by myself. Not that they say that we should ever go anywhere by ourselves, but hey....

M) If you were given the chance, is there anything you would have done differently at the beginning of C term to enrich your cultural experience?

Like I said, if I were given the chance I just would have done a lot more... like sightseeing stuff, right as soon as I got here, I wish I had done that. But actually the plane ride killed me, I was... that really killed me, and for the first couple of days I just couldn't really stay awake to do anything. But I still kinda wish I'd forced myself, cause I don't really have that opportunity, now that the work is heavier and I also wish I made, like as soon as I got here... I want to extend my flight, some of us decided that we wanted to stay longer, and, well after the first week when we decided that we wanted to stay longer, but ah...and I don't think that I'll be able to extend my flight now, it's too late.

I wish I had traveled more in the beginning. I wish I had come earlier too, cause then I could have gone out, done more stuff. But... I would have like to travel outside of Thailand, and inside of Thailand as well, and gone to see the Grand palace, I still haven't been there. And what I wanted to do, was I wanted to go to a wat, or a wat-type place, and stay there, and actually learn something. And I don't know if...

Well, you can go and...be a monk for however long you want

I would have wanted to go and see what it's all about, and I think that even visiting, unless you visit for an extended period of time, I wanted extreme exposure.

You wanted to be a monk for a day?

Or more.... or.... yeah. I don't think I would want to shave my head though! I was just thinking, oh...but maybe?

So you want to be a monk...ette?

Nun.

A nun, yeah.

M) Would you have done anything differently at the beginning of B term?

That term was a pain in the ass...but I don't see anything they could have done to make it less of a pain in the ass.

I think that B term was fine, and at that point that traveling stuff couldn't really be changed... Actually, I would have picked a different project. I would have picked one that goes out, to the middle of nowhere.

Umm.... I don't think that there's anything that they could have done that would have convinced me. Other than actually coming here. That... I would not want to just be in the city. Because I wouldn't expect them to say, oh well it's just like any other city. Because, while it is... there's stuff that's I've learned here, that is somewhat... I don't know.

I think that for the projects that you're going away, they should explain the living conditions, like as exactly as they can, cause I know I was kind of scared off at first, don't know where I'll be staying, and it's kind of scary... but then, hearing from the Mai Sot group, they said it was really cool, and I mean you know, it was tough, not necessarily pleasant.

But do you think that if they had said to you, it's tough, that you won't have running water or electricity, that that would make you feel uncomfortable?

No, no-no, I mean, yeah obviously that wouldn't be... it's kind of not good to say that, but at the same time, I'd know exactly what I'm getting into, that's what I'm saying, that it wouldn't have been so bad if I was like, no running water... but at the same time, ahh... you know, you got to be comfortable with you bed... like you know I had no idea I could be sleeping on... lot of people I know are sleeping on the streets and... I didn't know

I had wished that they could give us a more accurate description of the projects.... but then I realized, when we get the projects, we're going to make them what they're going to be.... anyway. So.... them setting it up, we could completely change it....

I'm not blaming them. I mean, it's obviously not easy setting up these even as much as they are....

Ideally, it would be nice, [interrupted]

At least make sure that the project is an IQP. You know... I think.... our project, our groups is.... I think it's arguable that our project is an IQP, I think it would be better off as an MQP honestly. In the CS field.

I think that what the liaisons want done, and what.... I don't know if they could get a better description of what an IQP is, or I mean....

Yeah they should definitely let the liaisons.... they should give them a better idea of what the IQP is. Cause it seems like if you deal with a company or an organizations, they see free labor, as opposed to... course I mean, I don't know if that's just the company, but it seems like the school should make that as clear as possible, although I don't know, maybe they did.

That and I think that if they take the project that liaison gives them, they should be able to tell from the description, whether it's an IQP or not, and if it's not, then don't give it to me! Cause even when they gave us ours, they were like, yeah you'll have to do this, you're going to have to make it an IQP. Like, okay, but... you know? Like if the implications just weren't there, then you'd be screwed.

Another thing I think it would have been nice, during B term, to get a sheet of things, like stuff to do, or see. Cause even then you could start making plans, and you really don't know where to go, unless you've studied up on tourist places, which, you know, I didn't. And I would have like to know where to go, like some of the temples, the wats....

M) Do you feel that interaction with Chula students could have enhanced your cultural experience in anyway? What type of interaction? How could it have enhanced your cultural experience?

The impression I got is that they show you around.... and it would be useful for a project....

They could show you around obviously, cause since they live here they know what's going on, and since you're both students you're both like linked together. Yeah so, it's a lot easier to get along, you can related to each other and have a good time, and they... they know what' up. They can... yeah.

I think that the interaction that I had with my Thai friend was...well I don't know if it was culturally enriching, but.... it was culturally enriching when he was here, cause he could take us places, or like show us places to go that were I guess, exciting, and that we wouldn't have necessarily found from any tour book. And also that he could explain things that we saw that we wouldn't have necessarily been able to understand otherwise. Like we were going through the market, and we saw someone who couldn't walk, and didn't have a wheelchair, and was crawling along, you know with the bucket, and I was like, well why aren't they with their family? And he was like if they had one, they would be, and just explained the whole social interaction of it, which I thought was really neat, cause its not like you can just look up in a book, If I see this...what does that mean, you know?

He could explain some...misconceptions that even tour books put you with. And granted, he might not be any more accurate, he might be biased because he's Thai, but... at the same time, he's biased because he's Thai, so that was...as to how a Thai person perceives it, as opposed to how it's portrayed...

Well I think also, on a non-social part of it, I'd be kind of curious to see what the Chula philosophy on education is, cause just from the... this is kinda only based only on the fact that they wear uniforms, which is kind of a

lousy thing to base an opinion on, but just from that, I'd say they their philosophy on work is a little bit different, know what I'm saying? You know, I'm, just kinda getting through school, I don't really go out of my way... I'm not like really enthusiastic about my education or anything, and I wonder if the philosophy is different here. Not that you can really make a generalization about that really, but it just seems that things here are a little bit more formalized.

Like, it might have been interesting to attend a class, maybe...just go around with a student for day see what they do. Cause I know I see students everywhere, at all times of the day, so it makes me wonder, how is their schedule set up?

Yeah I think that... They want us to understand how technology relates to society. And they want us to relate it to Thailand. But, at the same time, I don't think they give us enough time to have a hands-on experience with an interaction that like... how technology functions here, as opposed to at home, for us to really have an accurate sense of how, the technology of our project would affect society, because I think that we only understand fully or not even fully the implications that it has at home, and then we bring those... biases into our project...

M) What could be done in order to enhance interactions between WPI and Chula students before we left? After we had arrived?

I think if they gave you some form of contact before you left... like they (pen pal) yeah, a pen pal...internet-pal. That you could start talking back and forth, and then when you got there, you'd have some knowledge, or they'd have some knowledge of what you like to do...

You'd have somebody you know here.

You can talk to other people too it's not just like you have to talk to just one.

I would say yes but no. Sometimes you get paired with someone who didn't really have the same interests as you, or whatever. At the same time if you got paired with somebody like that, they could work with someone else. And I don't think that, based on what I've seen here that a Chula student would volunteer unless they wanted to do it, you know? And it seems like they would want to, although they could be just the people that I met.... but I think there are enough of them that it wouldn't be a problem.

I think it depends on the person.

I would immediately begin cracking ridiculous jokes, kind of see how they react to that, and if they thought it was funny, I'd just keep cracking the same jokes the whole time. And then it would be really cool, to finally meet them, you know? And if they didn't think it was funny, or didn't get it or whatever, then I'd just stop.... pick the next guy.

It would depend on how often they email back to us. I tend to write responses to emails, not start them.

Yeah I probably respond to like half of the emails that I get... but in that situation I would make an extra effort to respond... especially if people that I knew that went beforehand, or even people that I didn't know said it was useful, then I would definitely... because every time I though of a question during ID2050 I just went and asked my Thai friend and when he was there I would ask him, but when he came here like halfway through that class, and so the emails, would be like way spaced out, but they'd have lots of questions in them! So...

I think that email buddy could be good as to get as soon as possible, like about the same time that you find out that you are going.

Living with a Thai person would be cool

That's a very good idea! I would have liked to do that. Preferably somebody that spoke English somewhat. But hey...!

I think that the thing to remember is that a lot of Chula students don't even live in dorms. They live at home. So it might be a neat idea, finding people that would want to room with people they don't know...

Or at least put us in a dorm that has Thai students instead of international students.

Speaking of which, it might be nice to know the people that do live here.

Yeah have some type of dorm... introduction type deal.

I mean, I know they're grad students and they're busy... but it's not like I'm going to go around knocking on their doors... although I know some people who would... hi, I'm American and I live upstairs!

I don't know if this is related, but I think that some good information to have...

uh.... oh yeah, I think that a cool thing they could have done is have WPI foot the bill for a phone call to our liaison. I just do not like email at all.

I think that that's pretty true. Cause Puerto Rico got to call their liaison's, when I tutored then last D term. And I ... it seemed like every group after they had their phone conference was so much more on the ball. And like, when we came here, they were like oh, after you first meeting with your liaison, your project will have a lot more form. Well, why couldn't we have had that before? You know.... and you guys! You would have really knows what was up at that point!

I would like to say, maybe we should have taken initiative at that point.... I mean, we could have easily got the email of our liason, given him a call

But they won't... I wouldn't say that they wouldn't let you, but you know how we have to draft the email, get it approved and everything, we had to go through that whole process.

Yeah, I didn't see the need for that. Just send an email, just talk to them like a normal person. It's not...
... a little bit different, there's a cultural barrier and all.

Right actually yeah, that's true.

.M) Thinking back to interaction.... what other kinds of interaction would you be interested in?

I think working with them would be cool

Yeah. I don't know if they have to do any kind of projects... anything like an IQP.... (something like a senior projects) yeah something that they could like either ... that our project could be... not.... that and I wouldn't mind.... I don't know if I could really help someone with English when I don't really know Thai.... but I wouldn't mind being a guinea pig just for language, if someone was trying to practice their English.

That would be really cool too, if we could do a project with Chula students, so we wouldn't have to.... well, you'd still have to worry about it, but you'd have someone to help you through directly, with the cultural things. And if you liaison was some one who was like up high, and you need to have good Thai manners when you meet with them and stuff, you could have someone to help you out with that directly. As opposed to a teacher just saying like... yeah

It might be nice to have Thai classes here, more often. I noticed somewhere that there were Thai classes that we could take, that were never mentioned to us

Like at Chula?

I don' t know.... just anywhere

On the thing about working with Chula students, so that we would learn Thai manners and stuff... I think that it's good to have them as a guideline, but from talking to the project that had Thai students in their group, it seems like it would be a lot more.... that person's project than the other people in the IQP's, because I think that a lot more stuff would get directed at them, in Thai. I wouldn't want that one person to have the responsibility of 4 people's behavior. Whereas if you're in a group and you're all foreign, then you all have equal responsibility, but if there was one Thai person who was supposed to be setting an example for you, and you did something that wasn't fitting or whatever... um... mai roo...(shrugs)

M) More comments?

More trips!

More trips to not-touristy places

Yeah. yeah.

My only regret is, yeah, traveling. I wish I took initiative on my own to travel more.

Yup. At the same time, I don't feel bad about not having traveled while I was here, because it just makes me want to come back all the more. And now that I feel comfortable, that if I was here on my own I could navigate, and would know the culture enough so that going out into an area where I hadn't already been, would be an adventure, but wouldn't be dangerous or wouldn't be treading on completely unfamiliar territory so. At that point, I planned it an introduction to Asia, so I'm not disappointed with what I got out of it. I realize that there's more stuff I could have done, but...

That's a good point, what I got out of it, that now I wouldn't be too scared if I just decided I wanted to go somewhere, even by myself, like I'd feel totally, so long as I knew the language a little bit, like go to any.... well at least any city. Which even before, I mean I never left the country, so even before I wouldn't have been able to do something like that. But now like, at the very least I could go to any major city, and be pretty comfortable with what's going on.... as long as I could afford it.

INTERVIEW 3

M) What did you learn in the Bangkok preparation courses about Thailand's culture?

I don't know... the Buddha book that we read for ID2050... it was a nice book, but I don't think it really... I think that was probably the more useful of the two, Siamese Tragedy (was not good) yeah. I, I didn't even read it... (laugh)

I did.

Well still, it... it was just boring facts about Thailand!

I read most of it, and it was.... yeah it was a lot of facts and that was it. A lot of history.

I mean a lot of what I took from Siamese Tragedy had to do with our project...

I think a lot of it has to do with being in Bangkok itself, and not out where it's less of a commercialized, and a big city, I think things are kinda a little different, they're toned down, as far as... cause there's so much a rush for the commercial kinda deal... it just doesn't seem like that's really.... stuff that we learned from those books didn't really apply in our dealings with people.

I think that the Buddha book was good, cause it gives you perspective of you know.... I don't know the exact figure, but a lot of people here are Buddhist, it's 90 something percent. So I think that's interesting to know about, you know how they're mentality... what their mentality is about dealing with people is and how it reflects in what we've seen while we're here, I mean it just doesn't really maybe prepare you for how people react to you, but it kind of explains it as it happens.

I'd agree with that.... it tells you about customs a bit more than.... Siamese Tragedy would especially when, I'm just comparing the two you know, I mean I'm sure there're other better books out there that would do even more with that information,

Basically Siamese Tragedy was pointless.

Yeah. The other one was interesting, but I don't think it really helped that much like in...

Though our Thai teacher did teach us quite a bit in the time we had, I think it was good, that what we learned but I think that more time should be allocated to Thai language, because I think that in fact doing interviews is such a hard thing.... even if you do allocate more time to speaking Thai before we go away, you're still not going to be able to conduct an interview with someone, it's just the nature of learning a language. But, I think that for everyday dealings, we needed more Thai language training... I think. It would make things a lot less frustrating, more easy, just in dealings in general.

Transportation commands, things like that, if we'd gone over things like that it would have been very useful (left, right) Right, I didn't know that until I got here! Like, if you're telling the taxi cab drive.... you have to move your finger around in his face if you want to tell him where to go. So, directions, things like that. What else.... I'm trying to think of things off the top of my head, so I don't know....

One of the things that I thought would actually behoove the IGSD in.... for this project site, is to have, or at least offer a language class while we're here, because it's all well and good to have it in Worcester, and we go for 2 hours a week, but outside of class nobody speaks Thai now if you have that same preparation course, that you also offer while you're here, you would learn so quickly, because you take what you learned in the class, and you'd go out and use it, you'd use it right away every day, and I think that would make the experience far more, or far less abrasive. Being able to speak the language has been the most... it's been the largest frustration. Especially with our project where we've had to teach people. And it's so hard and frustrating. To want to show someone how to do something, but not a: not know how to communicate it to them, and b: not knowing if they really understood what you said. So that point, overcoming the language thing was pretty.... tough.

A lot of times, that they would just say that they.... when we got there that we would have translators, so not to worry about that, but yeah we had a translator, but our translator didn't have the greatest.... like, he spoke English well, but he didn't have the best.... like, I wouldn't say he spoke English perfectly and understood

everything we were saying so.... it was something you never thought of, because they said, if you need translators, you will have them. So you never thought, well what if my translator doesn't get what I'm saying, what does that mean for answers from the.... I mean, they.... our ID2050 professor kind of got into triangulation, and getting dual.... but that's kinda...

You can't do that on the spot while you're teaching. You can't get that kind of triangulation. In our case, this is just in our case, you know... but this is all we know, you know....

And ah I mean.... in Thailand, I guess other than Zimbabwe, Thailand is the only IQP site with a real language barrier, wouldn't you agree? (well, Zurich too) yeah, but Zurich Switzerland, less, less there because people speak more English than in Thailand (Here it's more in-your-face) yeah. And closer language, closer customs.... but Thailand.... totally different. So.... experience than that like that's the reason... I was just trying to think of a reason why.... it's tough you know, they haven't offered these things already, but that's probably why.... I said that about ah, continuing the language course here.... it would be good for, for.... aside from just learning the language, it would be good even just as refreshing our memory from the ID2050, or because even in the 3 weeks between the class and when I actually got here, I forgot pretty much everything.... the course wasn't that fresh in my mind. Continuing it would have.... I'd probably be able to speak Thai pretty well by now

I would have attended a Thai class here, like 2 nights a week, I would definitely have done that. At least, I mean, don't make it mandatory...

Yeah I mean, we've all seem people who just will not make an effort, to speak Thai.... but for the people who would like to learn to speak Thai, I think that would be great. But have it optional.

Another thing is.... I mean buying things, bargaining... you don't know if you're getting ripped off. Telling the person you speak Thai, telling them you know, it's too much or too little or something like that.

Plus you got you get a lot more respect if you show them, even the minimal amount we know, I mean if you walk by a tuk-tuk driver and you can tell them mai ou, you know, that you don't want it they leave you alone, but that can just say No, or whatever, they'll hassle him down the street. We've all had that experience.

M) What surprised you most about Thai culture upon your arrival?

Probably the amount of smiling and laughing that they do. Where, normally, at home, if you walk by someone and they sort of smile and laugh, they are making fun of you! But here, I mean that, I don't know, but I wouldn't think that that's the case. Some of time, you know, not that they're making fun of you, but they think you know this person looks so different from me.... I don't know what to do, so I laugh you know. But I think that's kind of frustrating at first, cause you get kind of a chip on your shoulder, because you think they're laughing at you, but for them, it's just how they react to the situation... how they deal with a source of.... unrest.

I don't know about surprising I mean.... wasn't too shocked by the whole thing at first

They said we'd see smiling people, but it's just... well yeah it doesn't prepare, it's just like the whole hypothetical... when you get a hypothetical, you just react like whatever, but then when it does happen, you're forced to deal with it, and even then.... I don't think it was explained that way it really is. You know our Thai teacher had just said they're happy people, lots of smiles laugh all the time, laugh at everything, but that's not, you know... if you get a group of people that looks at you, points and giggles, you know they're not making fun of you they're just looking at you like you're so interesting, or so different from me, and she just kinda said that they smile and laugh a lot.

M) What aspects of your activities in Thailand have been most culturally enriching? In what way?

I think just dealing with the people, buying things, you know food.... eating here, it's just different. Everything's different, so I mean the interaction with people where they're different demeanor about things where in the US, they're not.... ah I'll say that in Thailand they're generally more friendly and that's cultural in a way, cause that's their culture you know? So that's one thing that I found to be very interesting as opposed to like, putting up Asia, Thailand, and at home back in the US, as culturally different. A lot of the structures of the buildings, the way they make things, visiting the Grand Palace...

I think being able to, where we work in the slums, just to notice how there's such incredible affluence in Thailand, and yet there are... the problems with poverty are pretty major, and just noticing that the people, I mean they're not.... they don't hate their lives because they're poor, you know they have a very excellent outlook on life, it's just their mentality that they are poor, and that's just what their life is, and they don't have a like a chip on their shoulder, cause they're poor, whereas in the state.... that's what it is, you know it's someone else's fault that.... or, well that 's a generalization, but poor people seem like they're miserable and upset, and it's someone else's fault that they couldn't do this, or couldn't do that, whereas here they just accept that that's their life and they go along with their life regardless of the life that they've come to.... just by being born into it It's like the caste system maybe.... or like the rich and the poor people they're just so separated.... the poor people do not try... to become rich. They have their place in society which is interesting.

I just think it's nice like how nice people are here, if you go to a store, and they're like, all happy to try and help you and home people might be kind of rude, even if you're just trying to buy something and I think...

Like at all the restaurants, if you have a tray, you just leave it. And if you try and bring it over to the trash, they run over and grab it from you!

Everybody wants to help you here....

M) What were aspects of Thai culture that you thought you would experience base on what you learned in your preparation courses? Have you experienced them?

I think our Thai teacher had said how people were more relaxed, and how it was harder to get them to do things, definitely have experienced that, like we'd schedule things, and when we'd show up they'd be like well not today, that happens a lot.

umm.... the traffic. Everybody's in a rush, trying to get ahead of each other in traffic, people walking on the sidewalk, I just noticed that. Either that or they're just in lala land while they're.... it's just one or the other.... it's different.

I think that the driving is all crazy cause it's a Buddhist mentality where, if you're going to die today you're going to die so why be careful?

That's something that I expected to be a little bit easier, like talking with someone about their culture, especially the way that we've always said that Thai's are very friendly, they're very open willing to talk to strangers, I found it.... maybe it was both on my part and on the part of the people I was talking to, but I found it very difficult to ask them questions about their culture, whereas I just wouldn't expect that from what I've been told about how Thai people are, like I can understand if somebody came to me and said what's it like being an American, I wouldn't I would think it was stupid but.... I bet a couple of times I asked things like that, cultural things why is this like that, is this right, is it a belief, just it was very awkward, and the response I got wasn't....

I think I asked about the King, something about the King, you know, how.... the whole idea behind the mandate of God, I don't know it was just a question like that, it was very awkward, and I didn't really.... it was awkward

I think it comes from like a misconception on, from being not from living in Thailand, where just like there are a lot of stereotypes about every place in the world, where you think one thing, that's the general consensus because you never really looked into it, here it came that I had a misconceptions, or I thought about things one way, I'd try and ask about it, which was kind of awkward.

M) Do you think that the background info you received as part of the preparation courses contributed to your cultural experience in Thailand?

I don't know... all that stuff that we heard there that we wouldn't have found out anywhere else... like with the bottoms of your feet.

Yeah those are just like good to know, and we did learn a lot of those thing.... a lot of the things that, especially, I found it redundant when (a Thai woman) gave us that lecture at Chula, she was teaching us to why, and stuff

like that, and we had already learned that, we had learned a lot of things about respect, and things that make Thai people who they are. I thought that was good, our Thai teacher taught us about that. And I'm sure there are other things that we don't know that we've been doing and they've just.... most Thai people have probably just passed it off, as us being farang and that's it.

I mean, they wouldn't come up to us and tell us that we're doing something wrong, that's not in their nature to do that...

I think that one thing that we definitely learned... I think that one of the things that has really been apparent is how Thai's, the importance that they view teachers, and how much respect they have for teachers, because we've kind of done the role reversal where we teach them, and it just seems kind of awkward where we should be reaching them where its obvious that they feel that... you know, because they're teachers.... it's hard because... I don't want to say that they joke around a lot during it, or don't give their full attention, but it seems sometimes, maybe because we're young, because you know, they're older than us so that's one thing, and they're teachers, so they got two up on that, and it's kind of awkward sometimes, where you'll be trying to teach, and they'll be blatantly talking to the person next to them, where.... I don't know that wouldn't be a sign of disrespect towards me, because they are older, and they're a teacher, as that extra added.... respect you know, that I'm supposed to show them. I mean that's a big thing that we've learned. At least I have.

M) Do you have any recommendations or suggestions for the Bangkok preparation courses that you feel would help enhance the cultural experience of future Bangkok Project Center participants?

More.... you know how our Thai teacher would talk to us at the end of class? More of the kind of stuff.... talk instead of like learning

More cultural

We could ask questions about Thailand to somebody who knows. Our teacher doesn't live in Thailand.... but she does know quite a bit, but. Right, she grew up in Thailand, but students our age would have been better to talk to about these kinds of things....

And the things is, the cultural experience is, half the cultural experience once you've arrived, is from your project, you know that's what you're doing half the time, talking to people who are Thai, that's where most of my cultural experiences are coming from, from doing the project. So. So, the preparation was.... I don't think that it could be,.... it can be better, but it can't be that much better. Because you'd have to have people who know exactly what's going on, Thai people who are fairly up to date, they've been to Thailand,.... even though our Thai teacher is a perfect example of that, I'm sure that there things that she doesn't know that we could have used know what I mean

It would have been helpful to talk to other Thai people

Yeah.

Yeah if definitely would have been.... just. .not one person.

Is next year's IQP group going to have Thai students, you know?

Without them, I Would have been lost a couple of time, at least, more that a couple of times. So I mean, I think there is definitely room for improvement.

I think it's all to know things about the culture is completely different from experiencing those things, so it really is limited as to what you can include, I mean you can say till you're blue in the face.... that you can't touch children on the head, but until you get there, well that's not a good example, but. Stepping over books – I'm sure that millions of us well, we've done that plenty of times since we've been here, but you don't really think, you think oh, that's quirky that's different from our culture, but until you do it and someone gets pissed at you about it, it doesn't really hit you that you don't do that. And I think that just the experience, experiencing different cultural things, is just so much more effecting than just stating random facts. So I think it's, I mean they did as well as

M) If given the chance, is there anything you would have done differently at the beginning of C Term to enrich your cultural experience? Beginning of B Term?

Go see stuff more, when you have the time. And don't not do something because you think you'll have the time or you don't want to. They should have like a parent figure here to tell, No seriously! Cause you know how your parents are always like [high falsetto, no clue what he said] at least that's what my mom does all the time. And you might not regret it when you get back, but ten years from now, 20 years from now... you might regret it... Go see stuff.

I didn't go see much stuff, and there's probably a lot of stuff that I wish I had seen.... maybe if the IGSD came up with a list of things, and like detailed description of them, because at first there were things that sounded kind of cool to me, but when people did them, and were like, that was completely useless! Like the Lonely Planet that's going to.... it's going to try and get you to do as much... it's going to tell you everything.

Guidebooks are too broad. Especially when you're staying here for 2 months they're made for people who are going for a shorter amount of time.

Or just the stuff that are things that you I don't know what I'm trying to say, kind of more specific. I don't know.

Go see stuff.

I think I would have come earlier (yeah!) I know some people did come a few days earlier, I think it would have been better if....

... if I had more money... I mean that's always the thing, you spend all your money...

I think that, well it would depend on what type of personality you were, but I think it would be good to come before, because by the time you're at the end, you're so sick of doing your project, and you've been gone for 2 months, (burned out) I know some people who want to stay, but I just want to get home, see my family. I mean, you've just been away for so long, and we, we don't even go away.... I don't know. Before.

M) B Term?

Nope.

Beginning of B term, we didn't know anything, so I can't think of anything...

Well I know I wouldn't have taken such hard classes B term, along with this, it was so much work I didn't have time to...

Well they told me I'd have a lot of work, I just didn't think it would be that much that two other classes I wouldn't be able to....

It should be emphasized that it is a 1/6 of a credit...

Yeah, it should be made a third,

I mean, a sixth of a credit! That's a hell of a lot of work... especially with the meetings all the time, one class not that long 2 hours, yeah plus the other one. Yeah, and you have to do Thai homework, need to be thinking about what to do for the next Thai class, need to be writing, constantly, meeting with your group all the time to do things, I'd say like 4 meeting a week? (yeah) which takes up a lot of time in terms of your schedule, you have to go back and type.... research.... a lot of work. Especially compared to the amount of credit you get.

I think they should make it credit only for the sake of, so that you can't take other classes... cause didn't someone say it doesn't really count anyway your PQP grade just gets swallowed up into your IQP grade.

I doesn't really matter what it's worth, it's just that you don't want to be taking other classes.

Cause I did actually, I took a class at Clark that semester, and I actually thought we got 1 1/6 credit for each term, but it was 2 1/6 for the whole semester, so I was only able to take one other class while I was taking the class at Clark a regular class, and then ID2050 and PQP. So it actually, it wasn't.... I mean if I had been taking... but it was an easy class. And I liked my other class, so...

Yeah the only reason I took less classes than I would have otherwise, the only reason was that I'd heard from people that PQP just kicks your ass, I wouldn't have expected that

I didn't know that...

They should just give us A's. Just for signing up. (laugh) No seriously! They should give us A's for signing up to go to Bangkok, I think that says a lot about our character.

I don't know if there are any other IQP sites that you need to take a language class before you go away, in addition to the regular ID....? (London)

They have it twice a week. So they have to cram, double-time into our ID2050 class, which is not an easy thing. You have to cover less about doing things, whereas another IQP group is learning more about how to interview, qualitative, quantitative analysis which are very important, at least, they stress that they are important, and we use them, so....

We spent a lot of time doing busywork.... wasn't helpful at all.

Less time on doing presentations, because I mean, we've given so many freakin presentations, we get how it works, you know?

It helps the first one, but after that...

No, it was definitely completely useful the whole time, but we don't need to be spending time in our class doing that, especially when had so much else and so little time. What our ID2050 professor was supposedly, supposedly?, was the expert at, social science research, he didn't teach as much of that as he probably should have, you know? I mean there was a lot of culture that flowed over into ID2050, a lot on public speaking.... I mean, he did so little on actually... ethnographic research undertaking...

I got the impression that there was a lot more that he actually wanted to get to but couldn't because we had so little time. He was constantly switching topics, going to other things, because we had only that one class a week.

M) Do you feel that interaction with Chula students could have enhanced your cultural experience in anyway? What type of interaction? How could it have enhanced your cultural experience?

You know, you can introduce people and just let it go from there

They can help you with the language (learned a lot of cool swears) they can take you places that they know about, show you around

Talking to them is a good thing

Emailing is a good thing

I think it's a good idea. I agree

If it was required I would participate. Maybe not if they just said here's an opportunity...

If they just said we don't care, you have to email them once

And maybe if they'd taken English language classes that would make it easier

We could help them learn English

We could gain cultural stuff and neat things about Thailand, but the whole point is to meet them and apply what you learned.

Our experience here a lot of it is about leaning about the culture. But, we're young and don't care so much about history, we want to explore. Not so much emphasis on culture and history. Don't want it to talk over what you're experiencing, and having someone your age to take you around and show you what they like to do it a good balance to that.

Instead of an older person; what we might find boring they'd love.

Well – having a pizza party meet everyone's pen pal, no! no! a dance! It'd be refreshing.

Maybe a meeting, a little soccer game

Yeah! that would be awesome!

Muay Thai between them! It'd be like street fighter

Things like that. "scheduled interactions" actually maybe they wouldn't have to be scheduled

We went to the CU TU game, that was awesome, and If we had gone with people, we could have met more people, and mingled with the CU students, and had gatekeepers! (woah) I think that'd be good

M) Other Comments?

Maybe this is just me, but I think the beach trip was perfect, we need to relax. But with Chiang Mai, something less touristy. We wanted to see Thailand in all it's glory, not selling us little trinkets and stuff.

Yeah.

Nix the floating market. The boat ride was cool.

It'd be like if we were at home, and went to Sturbridge Village. It's not America. I've seen all that stuff before.

The floating market – it wasn't the locale. It was just the tourist. I mean there were buses just dropping people off there!

Kind of Disney Landish.

We're not seen as Westerners, it's like moneymoneymoney....

With the hill tribes, people might get freaked out by us, but it's a natural reaction.

INTERVIEW 4

M) What did you learn in the Bangkok preparation courses about Thailand's culture?

I don't know what I learned in ID2050 about it...those books were not helpful.

M) Can you go into specifics about what you learned?

You're supposed to laugh at people when they fall down.

I learned more Thai. (sarcastic)

We learned about the wai.

Oh yeah...the whole social hierarchy.

We learned the date and time.

Our Thai teacher told us about some of the food we were going to see.

Didn't they teach us how not to offend the people? Somehow?

I don't remember exactly what they said...(jokingly in response to previous comment)

I know some people have said they have inadvertently offended people and they didn't know that they offended them until someone who was Thai mentioned to them that hi by the way you just offended this person. Yeah I think we could have had a little more on that because I know I've definitely done it.

M) Just more on how to interact with Thai people?

Yeah 'cause sometimes they will just look at you and they will just be like "farang does not understand."

M) So you mentioned before that you have offended Thai people? How did you do that?

The way I responded I guess just wasn't appropriate. I guess I didn't...I don't know...I don't know how I did it, I just know that they weren't happy.

M) To get back to an earlier comment...you mentioned the books were not helpful. Could you elaborate on this?

The books were not helpful at all. The Buddha book was not about Buddhism, it was about Buddha's life. And umm....Siamese Tragedy was poorly written

I have to say that the two books didn't really, I would say, didn't really prepare us culturally. Again, maybe Sumallee should spend more time on that than the fifteen minutes, ten minutes at the end of class.

M) So given your understanding of the limited time that we had between ID2050 and the Thai class would you have rearranged the focus of the classes in any way?

Maybe they could increase the number of...Maybe they could have two Thai classes. I think they could put more time into the social stuff if they just focused on language that was more what we'd use.

M) So do you mean a lot of what learned in language class you don't think was useful?

I mean I haven't used most of it. What would have been useful is how to order food at a restaurant and how to barter. Those are the two things...
Lesson one and two were fairly useful. With the conversations like telling...who you are and nice to meet you.

M) What surprised you most about Thai culture upon your arrival?

<Silence>

Well not then, but recently I have noticed that Thai people are pretty rude. They cut in front of you in the escalator and stuff like that and push you out of the way on the sidewalk.

I thought the sanitation was a little iffy and I was scared to eat some of the food. Especially...even across the street where we eat everyday now, but all the food was out and it was pretty weird because I was used to having everything tucked away until it comes out on a plate for you.

M) What aspects of your activities in Thailand have been most culturally enriching? In what way?

Going to the village in Chaing Mai. Just getting to spend time with those kids. I thought that was cool. I don't know how to describe it

I thought going to the soccer game was really cool because it was kind of like being at home. It made me see all the similarities more so than all the differences. It's not so different.

M) What were aspects of Thai culture that you thought you would experience based on what you learned in your preparation courses? Have you experienced them?

<Silence>

I was thinking about the dropping wallet, maybe 10 or 15 years ago, Thai people do that, run after you and say you dropped your wallet, but nowadays everything has changed. I think it's like the same in every country. Are they going to take your wallet back? No they're not. They are going to take all of your belongings and then throw it away. And...talking about our Thai teacher she was saying instead of saying Thai people are skinny, to make fun of them, you should say, "oh you are fat" and that should not be insulting. I don't agree with that. You never make fun of how people look and nationality you are supposed to leave their space of privacy.

Back on the wallet thing...we went to the movies and got prawn crackers, which are just the nastiest things, didn't even eat them, just opened the bag, smelled it, and put it down the seat next to us and we got up and went to the theater and this woman came running after us and said, "oh you forgot your prawn crackers!"

I guess I never...when they talk about Thai people are happy and they are really pleasant. I never like... maybe it's because we're so culturally different like in the way that we act.

If Thai people think your saying something kind of funny just kind of go with it 'cause you got to. They way I look at it, if someone said something really off in English, I'd probably laugh too.

M) Do you think that the background info you received as part of the preparation courses contributed to your cultural experience in Thailand?

<Silence>

I can't think of anything. Sorry!

M) Do you have any recommendations or suggestions for the Bangkok preparation courses that you feel would help enhance the cultural experience of future Bangkok participants?

More emphasis on Thai class. And on I think maybe a little on ID2050. ID2050, I don't think they covered all that much.

I think every project should have a Thai person in it.

It might be helpful if ID2050 was A Term and B term. I feel like all of a sudden they were like here write these 8 papers in seven weeks plus do all your PQP stuff and then oh by the way here's a little cultural stuff on the side. It seems like it was an awful lot to absorb in that amount of time.

M) You mentioned that you thought ID2050 didn't cover that much? Did you feel you had a good understanding of what was expected of you?

What they did was tell us, "turn this in" and then they were like "no it's wrong."

When your trying to research something, you have no idea where to start from.

We were able to get through our interviews pretty smoothly.

Because our liaison helped set them up

But the first interview we did to test out questions was on a focus group. They were looking at our interview questions and they were laughing and talking. They didn't care about it. So it would be better if you got help from your liaison to set up a meeting.

It was kind of...when someone looks at my work and then laugh and then not take it seriously.

I think it would be nice to have a Thai person to work with...regardless of whether they are in our actual group, if we could just have one to work with...

Yeah if we could have a Thai student to work with then they could help set up focus groups.

It would be so much faster allowing us to do so much more stuff.

M) Do you have any more recommendations or suggestions?

It seems like once a month or twice a month in Thai class we should have some Thai students who have recently been in Thailand come and talk about lifestyle. People who are going to Bangkok project center start thinking about Thailand early. It is important to learn Thai but 7 weeks, 14 weeks are not going to help. I think we should use time more effectively - maybe half the class talking about culture, lifestyle, etc., and then other half learning the Thai language. You never use words for today, tomorrow, and those times like 9 o'clock. Those things you don't really need to know. I think easier if you talk to Thai people about food and how to order.

Like how to order a banana pancake without egg.

I think it would be more useful

I think for ID2050. I think Siamese Tragedy was a good book. You have a good view of your project but after you read your book, you learn more about Thailand You learn more about the economy, corruption, etc.

Maybe having the same information but a different book. It might have been helpful

Plus all information in that book we can't get.

Yeah I don't know if that guy made it up but we tried to find his information sources and where he's getting all his numbers, but couldn't find them.

Siamese Tragedy was pretty good for us because it had a whole chapter related to our project. If any one had to deal with the government it would be good for them.

M) You mentioned before that it would be helpful if Thai students talked to the Thai language class? Can you elaborate on this idea?

There are a lot of Thai students at WPI. I don't think it would be very hard to get one or two of them to volunteer. Have different ones come in every time.

M) If given the chance is there anything that you would have done differently at the beginning of C term to enrich your cultural experience? Beginning of B term?

<Silence>

I think it would have been easier to do stuff in the beginning if we had a map of the area and bus routes and stuff like that. I did stuff but it took a lot more effort than it should because I didn't know how to get there.

I still haven't gone to the Grand Palace, but I attempted to get there twice.

Bus 47.

I wish I had gone around more... earlier. I would suggest I guess to anybody going here to get there at least a week before your project starts. That way you have time to see things

Stay a week after too.

Yeah I think that would be a good thing.

Why not? Plane ticket costs just the same?

I don't know I found this out from two of my fraternity brothers who went to Bangkok last year so from talking to them I was able to find out some good stuff, things to do, and just what to expect.

I talked to people who went last year and unfortunately both of them were space cases and had all these abstract things they were telling me.

So I don't know, a recommendation would be something like, maybe trying to get a little more interaction between the people who have gone and the people who are going. We only met that group once. That was kind short. I don't know how possible it is to set something up like that.

A couple of times throughout A or B term would be good.

At the very beginning when we were applying to the project centers, W was giving his little spiel on Thailand, and I asked him what's the food like there and he's like "oh they have American food." I was like what's the Thai food like and he's like well "you can get an American breakfast." He wouldn't tell me. <laugh>

I think knowing where a couple of restaurants are... I mean no one told me to go to the lady across the street. Just knowing couple places nearby just for the first few days you're here, would have been really helpful.

Yeah I had no idea where to eat.

Yeah MBK...ok I'll go there...

Yeah that's the thing, I looked at the map and it had Chula on it, but this dorm is no where near Chula's campus, so if you go towards MBK from Chula's campus, you end up over there somewhere. <pointing in a direction away from MBK> I found that out on the first day.

A map with a little more detail would have been nice

M) B Term?

Like I said probably talk to more people

M) Would you have initiated that yourself?

If I had known...if I had had an idea about who the people were.

M) Do you feel that interaction with Chula students could have enhanced your cultural experience in anyway? What type of interaction? How could it have enhanced your cultural experience?

Well they would have to speak English.

They could show us around.

Working with Chula students would help us with interviewing.

I think just interviewing anybody, not just Chula students.

Maybe we could have a basket ball game with them

Maybe they could meet, it doesn't have to be that many people, in the beginning and give us sort of a "head's up"

It would have been nice to learn the cheer before the soccer game

I think playing soccer or do activities like that would help the relationship

The activities would have to be optional. Not everyone is going to want to go. You cannot force people to attend.

I guess you can make it optional, but I think most people would attend. At least based on the group that is here. I think most people would do it.

We would get to meet more Thai people at least.

M) What could be done in order to enhance interactions between WPI and Chula students before we left? After we arrived?

<Silence>

I think they could do an exchange and have Chula students come to WPI

I know if there were going to be some exchange students coming to WPI, and they wanted Americans to email them before they arrived, I would want to do it. I wouldn't want to email them.

I think there are a lot of students that would. I got emails from students before I came to WPI. My roommate writes to students coming to WPI. They give her a couple email addresses and she answers their questions.

I think that it would be better face-to-face. If we got Thai people to come into class that would be beneficial.

I think they would give us more practical information than we got from the class.

M) If you have any last comments about anything that we have talked about or any others you feel are important that we didn't discuss now is the time to tell us.

Our advisors tell us what to want to do and our liaison tells us what he wants, but they don't communicate with each other. Our advisors don't tell the liaisons what the project consists of.

It seems like they only talk once a week.

Yeah once a week in the meeting.

And they don't even talk to each other the talk to us.

Our liaison keeps asking us to do stuff that is not an IQP. It's his dirty work.

There is supposed to be more cooperation between advisors and liaisons. At least agree on doing the same thing. Not out advisors want us to do one thing and our liaisons the other.

I think they could have given us a better explanation of what an IQP is at the beginning, because we got here and they were like this is not an IQP. And we were like ok....we have been doing this for how long now?

They could have communicated better before we even got the projects. Set it up and decided what the project was going to be.

If we had better communication problems would be less likely to happen

Then we wouldn't have to waste our time.

I think they should also....we had information that would have been beneficial to other groups. But they never ever said that if you had information for other people you could share it... because then we all researched the same thing. Even like the interview books.

Those would have been nice.

Somebody takes out all of them and then there is none left for anyone else

And we're not just talking about the WPI library, we're talking about all the libraries in Worcester.

Cleared out

Yeah and we're not the only IQP group right now. I am sure they had to take out book too. There are just not enough books to go around.

If they directly said we know everybody needs the same information and there is not enough books to go around. So when you get it, share them. I know that I spent all day for two days over one weekend looking for books and there were none left.

I think a book on IQP processes would have been beneficial

Even if they put the books on reserve in the library.

INTERVIEW 5

M) What did you learn in the Bangkok preparation courses about Thailand's culture?

A lot more than most Thai's. A lot of what we learned, Thai people don't know

The history and stuff.

There are Thai people here who know more about US history than we do. I wish we learned more history.

It might have helped me figure out what to do, where to go. Not just academic, just knowing about more stuff.

The economic crisis was huge, but knowing about religious ties, and cultural differences like how Buddhism would affect them. I think we overestimated the influence of Buddhism here. Thai people seem to take it more lightly. But knowing about the IMF, the World Bank, politics with the government, the corruption they all know about that.

Less Thailand specific, and more skills, like interviews and how to talk to people. Info on how to do presentations.

I didn't think the language class was useful. A sheet of common words, and a class or two would have sufficed. All we do is order food and we learned that here.

I'm not into politics, so I didn't like that. The Buddha reading was interesting, but not Siamese Tragedy. I don't think I'd start a political conversation with anyone here.

I liked the language class. Maybe 2 sessions a week instead of just one. I have had use for it. Over all they are impressed and it comes in handy. I'm more interested in the cultural aspects not so much ID2050

M) What surprised you most about Thai culture upon your arrival?

Nothing. I had no culture shock. I haven't seen one angry Thai, but nothing else.... people selling stuff on the street or whatever, I've seen that before so many times, so I wasn't like surprised or anything.

Mostly personal knowledge. It's different from my culture, but a lot of what they do here, they do in Puerto Rico. I've seen huts and banana trees etc. It's a new experience because I'm in Asia, but nothing was particularly shocking to me. Difference in the language took some getting used to, but scenery-wise not so much.

One thing, not shocking, but odd is the cleanliness issues. Inside this building is really clean, but they just dump trash out on the sidewalk or in the street, and it's stinks etc

It's distinctive.

I think what was shocking for me was how friendly everybody was. Smiling and how impressed they were with the little Thai that I could speak. Some smells have caught me off guard. The curry. The water, seeing the river... Positives are the big buildings, and the skyline we see from here. In the countryside, those huge elephants. Like someone cuts a teak tree with an ax, and drags it out of the woods with an elephant! That's crazy!

Is culture shock supposed to be a bad thing?

I heard it was worse when you go back home. Everything hits you then

Maybe when I go home, I'll see more differences.... but not right now.

The biggest thing for me is how dirty everything is. That and everyone is always to happy and smiling, and it doesn't seem like a front. In traffic, people are driving like maniacs, and they're like hi, how are you? Hey, Mai pen rai....

With the dirt, and there are ants crawling on food. Or flies landing on food. In American I'd try and get another meal.

M) What aspects of your activities in Thailand have been most culturally enriching? In what way?

I think definitely when I went away with 5 Thai friends, 2 spoke no English, and 2 spoke some English, and we went to this cabin on a dam, and very little English was spoken the whole time, and to be in an area with no tourists was awesome. Things were very natural, until they'd look at me. I wasn't bored at all, it was great culturally... Seeing how they paid the father respect, and the family that was there.

One thing I thought about Thai culture is the commercialism that's everywhere. Obvious in MBK, but in other areas too, there are rows of people selling the exact same thing, and they're packed with foreigners and Thais. People always say about how American is all about commercialism, but it seems that in some ways it seems like this place is much worse.

I think the most culturally enriching time I've spent here has been with Thai students. No really! It's been cool, fun. Like actual people here, not tourist traps. I think it's great spending time with people, seeing where they go, what they do.

Like the waitresses and waiters at O'Reiley's, they'll joke with you and welcome you there. And they're our friends. I haven't been spending much time with Thai people, but when I have it's been really cool.

Don't you tip really well there? Maybe they're just being your friends cause you tip well. Thai people are all very nice.

I've only seen one angry Thai person.... this lady was going after another one with a stool.... and that's all the anger or violence I've seen

Even the dogs are friendly. At home they bite me!

Cats. Oh, the cat across the street, he's awesome!

A lot of what was said – like leaving food on your plate, haven't seen that. Girls can't wear tanktops? Yeah they do, or less. People across the street eating, won't leave a grain of rice on their plate? It wasn't exactly disappointing, but we were told so much don't do this, don't do that, and it's not really applicable. Little things, I thought it was going to be different than it really is.

Oh but the ice cream on hot dog buns that was right on.

I think a lot of it helped, but I didn't have time, what with PQP, that thing was a full class, and we didn't get any break taking the language class, and my grades suffered for which I'm not happy. If we could have learned more that would have helped so much, but I didn't have time. I think it's amazing that we learned as much as we did in the limited time we had.

I think that we should have language and PQP as separate classes, because the work load was way too much. I think it would have been beneficial to have the language class as a real class.

What bothers me the most is that we come halfway around the world in order to experience new things, new culture, learning things, and do an IQP while we're here. But instead of doing all those things, we spend all our time writing, and rewriting drafts. Learning to write English

Which is what we did all last term.

All that we are doing with writing, either they should have done it last term, or it should be a sidenote, because our project is suffering. I'm in Thailand and I spend all my time in front of a laptop.

8 hours a day is good, but all we're doing is writing.

I'm wasting my time in Thailand doing all of this.

M) Do you have any recommendations or suggestions for the Bangkok preparation courses that you feel would help enhance the cultural experience of future Bangkok Project Center participants?

I think if they made it a real class. Everyone would get to know each other, it would be treated more seriously. If you had to meet every day, you wouldn't be able to put stuff off...

Yeah, maybe if was an actual class. MTRF.

Language 2 days, and ID 2 days

Exactly. I would be better, there's too much information to get in 2 hours.

I think we should have had pen pals.

We should all watch Brokedown Palace.

M) If given the chance is there anything that you would have done differently at the beginning of C Term to enrich your cultural experience? Beginning of B Term?

I would have met people

I would have gotten here on time.

I would have likes to meet Thai students at the very beginning. So you can make a friend while you're here. Meet people off the start and hang out with them

An orientation with Thai students would be helpful.

A welcome to Thailand party

We should had a big party downstairs, catered it whatever, invited all the Chula students....

We could just go downstairs and meet people, they all want to meet us

I don't know if many of us, in our group have really met Thai students

The Chula game was fun I thought.... maybe because I'm darker people start talking to me in Thai all the time. But at the soccer game I was with all these blond people, and they would just run up to us and be like, can I take your picture? And it was so cool, like we were celebrities. And I don't know that it would have happened it I was by myself.

I wanted to spend more time on campus hanging out with Thai people. Not being isolated in the dorm all the time. You know, you want to see how they are like at college. See-through white shirts.

What if, instead of being stuck in an international dorms, are there other dorms?

We could room with Thai students!

Yeah, if you had a Thai person for a roommate, that would be awesome.

That would be so much fun! It's be a blast

I wouldn't think that having a Thai roommate would be good, but maybe having them on the floor or the building

It's like if you're homesick or whatever, coming back to your room should be a respite. But if there was a Thai student there, you'd always be faced with it, it would be inescapable.

Yeah but that's why we came!
You could have gone to Washington!

But if you wanted to interact you'd have the floor

You could learn the finer points of the language.

M) Beginning of B term?

I would have read more about Thailand, cultural stuff. I didn't do any of that, I didn't even look at the Chula webpage till the day before I came here. So I would have read more on my own, outside the class.

I would have read Siamese Tragedy.

That's true. Off the record!

The only thing that would have helped me, is maybe watching some movies. Just hearing about it doesn't make it very real. Something that would accurately display the culture
Like a "Real World Thailand."

I would have liked to spend more time learning about what we would find here, not just how to write a proposal. Like, what am I going to remember when I leave? That our writing was so great, or that I was in Thailand and I saw this that etc. I would have liked to learn more before I came here

M) Do you feel that interaction with Chula students could have enhanced your cultural experience in anyway? What type of interaction? How could it have enhanced your cultural experience?

I would have liked social interaction. Like, the groups that worked with Chula students met with them afterwards. Not that I wanted a project with Chula, students, but hanging out with them would have been cool. I wish I was with Chula students, hanging out, learning about Thailand.

M) What could be done in order to enhance the cultural interaction between WPI and CU students before we left? After we had arrived?

Writing them before we left.

I definitely would.

I would probably emailed them after I went home too, you know?

Yeah and after you get here, we could have a big party, and be like, this is my pen pal, this is so-and-so's pen pal, and then you'd have connections, you'd know people.

Yeah I think that it would be a natural thing, start talking to them, and get to know them.

Of course I'd like to meet more, but I don't think it would work out with trying to write to like 6 different people at once

More like 2 though.

Maybe 2... But you can't really set it up according to interests, like what are you going to do, meet the Chula engineers?

Do random, not interests, maybe 2....

They could have a sign-up, like meet American students, have a pen pal who is coming over in a few months. Not necessarily structured around what they do....

Just give me a Thai person!

Have our pen pal pick us up at the Airport.

We got skills, we can throw a party! Like, even if it was something silly like field day, or day at the park. Instead of writing all the time, we could hang out with Thai students.

Everyone could do something they are good at, like camping or motocross, so that we're not just taking from them.

BBQ! A huge BBQ, if we go out there, and want them to speak Thai to us, but they want us to speak English to them, so...

America Day! It would be so great!

In their eyes, we're rich, but we're not really that rich

A nice juicy hamburger.... America Day.

Overall the experience has been good. With our recommendations, it would be even better.

Yeah

One thing is that the comments on our proposal during B term were fairly trivial, but now it's more high-level. The transition was frustrating, and it affects the time here.

Like if we had two is's in a row....

Or like this sentence needs rewording.... stuff like that in B term. And now its like your format is wrong, you need topic sentences, and I don't like your flow. And it's frustrating because you don't know what it means. If they took the time in B term you'd understand what it was, and you'd have a better time here.

I have a feeling that the way it worked out, the comments last term were different, and this term it's been nothing but rewriting. Like structures that we wrote last term were wrong.

The kind of structure we had, last term they didn't say anything, and then when we got here it was completely wrong. And it happened like with every section.

Well this is adviser related.

Maybe if they split duties. With two advisers it's hellish, never again will I allow myself to do a project with two advisers.

Maybe if they looked them over together...

INTERVIEW 6

M) What did you learn in the Bangkok preparation courses about Thailand's culture?

The only thing that I learned of value, and I'm being completely serious, was numbers. Culture I though was ridiculous, it had nothing to do with what I'm experiencing now. Seeing certain people roll their eyes in class let me know that what I was being taught was ridiculous. The only thing I was glad I was taught was the numbers. As for ID2050 the books were not helpful, the only helpful part was learning how to interview people and gather information. I do not see anything that was taught in class happen in front of me.

M) Can you go into specifics ?

Alright: language. What have we used except numbers? And if we try to talk, then they start talking to Thai back to us, and we look stupid, then you have to say I don't speak Thai (oh that was another useful thing). Cultural difference, like girls in Thailand dress conservatively...no, that's not the case!

I thought that there were 2 things lacking from the preparation. The first was things that we weren't taught that would have been useful...how to say turn left, turn right, go straight. Stuff like that that took me six weeks to learn that. So I've been waving my hand in the taxi for the first 6 weeks. Stuff like that would be useful, but it would mean shifting the focus of the Thai language course to something more useful, so it's less academic, and more conversational aimed at getting us the bare necessities. My second gripe is the way the class was run, I don't think it needed to be a graded class, I think a satisfactory grade would be much more beneficial. In ID2050, we had an awesome person come in and talk to us once about the motivations that lie behind the culture, and I would have easily traded Thai language classes to hear that person speak more. The stuff we learned in ID2050 was geared more towards research papers and less towards culture.

M) Did you think that was unhelpful?

I though it was interesting certainly, and I learned a lot about the different aspects of writing a paper, and interviewing techniques and stuff, but it didn't help me with my interactions with Thai people as much. It helped me do project work, but I could have done that and gone to Boston. I didn't see anything all that specific to Thailand. We read these books, like Siamese Tragedy, but we never discussed them. And while we are all intelligent college students, I'm sure there are things I missed, that my other classmates could have pointed out that would have been valuable for us all to see. Instead of just reading it and incorporating it into papers. There were two Thai kids in the class, just think what they could contribute!

M) You mentioned a while back you think that in ID2050 it was helpful to learn interview skills and gather information, etc. Do you feel you were adequately taught how to carry out processes of the IQP?

Well we got some idea how to do it

I agree with that. It gave us a sort of a feeling about how to do it but I don't think you know. Even now I have more of a feeling, but I really don't know how to do it. I think it is just something that comes with experience. So in that regard, I think that he did a fairly good job. I think maybe if we had done some practicing that would have helped, making everybody more comfortable. One gripe that I remember is that we always worked in our project groups during PQP and IQP. ID2050 we always had to do something with our project groups too. I thought it would have been nice to change it up a little bit and work with other people to just give everybody a break from their project partners when it is not necessary. It would have made it a little more enjoyable and add a little spice to it.

M) Any other comments on what you learned in the preparation courses?

Personally I though there was too much emphasis on the grade. As for the class, I thought it was fun. But a lot of things weren't necessarily very useful. In ID2050, that book was absolutely unnecessary [Buddha]. It was like a storybook, there was no point in understanding Thai culture. At least in Siamese Tragedy there was some

real information, and history we could get out of it. I agree that discussion would be helpful. The presentations were okay, but we didn't need to spend so much time on them, instead of learning things like how to interview or how to run a meeting. There was that thing with Natelie Mello, about how not to run a meeting, but without personal experience, just watching or hearing about it doesn't do much.

M) What surprised you most about Thai culture upon your arrival?

The fact that it wasn't what I expected it was going to be. I came here thinking that I was going to be thinking I was stepping on different planet by what was explained to me in class. Also because of the fact that I never really left New England. Having lived in New England for my whole life, I just thought it was going to be a lot different than it really is, but unfortunately for me it wasn't. That's the biggest shock to me.

Personally I come from a similar country so nothing surprised me.

The initial shock that I had, and it took a week or two to set in, was trying to understand the Asian thought process...having to work closely with Asians. Because I learned the hard way that they are not always going to say I don't agree with you they'll say yes they do and push you away...and so I didn't understand exactly how interaction worked. So it took a while and I am still learning. It has taken a long time to understand. It is always going to be a shock, but if you understanding what is happening before hand you might be able to know how to react.

M) Can you give an example?

Well when you go into a meeting and they say yes this is fine and two hours later they say no this is wrong. I was very confused. It took me talking to a friend who has lived here for a year now who said, "look in Thailand there is are circles of trust and you are outside of those circles, and so they want to get rid of you." So once that had been explained to me, I was able to do something about it. But when you are told one thing and two hours later you are told another, who's to say in two hours it's going to be something else. More can be explained about the business works in Asia. Because at the end of the day that what's we're working towards. We are working with our liaisons on a professional level. It's easier to interact with students because we have more things in common. It's less of a barrier and plus they are probably more interested in talking to us and we're more interested in talking to them.

M) What aspects of your activities in Thailand have been most culturally enriching? In what way?

<Silence>

I'll try and answer a different question...Ummm...I think that we get here. The way that this whole process is set up, we get here and it takes probably two or three weeks to get your ...to get to the point where your comfortable with your own area. Then you have maybe two weeks timeframe where you can go out and do things and explore things and then your in a state in the project process where you don't have time to do that and I'm quite bitter about that. I didn't take full advantage of my two-week window of opportunity when it was there. I missed seeing all the things I'd like to see. Maybe that's just WPI and I should just go to a different school, but I think something could probably be done about it. I know that we were warned about it so I can't really complain that that didn't happen. But I wish that I had more time to could just go out and see temples and to be able to go outside of the city. Things that are not all that possible to do now.

One thing I found out about Thailand...it's kind of like a culture shock thing too. The fact that there is always bartering going on...one thing I really learned about Thailand, they just want your business bad...it's just the way that there's no set price on something and people will try and screw you over if they can but just to still keep your business they will drop their price lower which I can kind of see about Thailand is just they gotta get your money somehow. That was just something I found out about Thai culture.

I think Thailand is very very Buddhist. I don't like bartering so much because to me the problem bargaining I hated it. But it's everywhere wherever I am going, in Asia, it's like that everywhere so it didn't surprise me. The culture is very different from the states.

M) What were aspects of Thai culture that you thought you would experience based on what you learned in your preparation courses? Have you experienced them?

Actually yes. People truly do smile all the time. Which is really cool. Everyone here is just much more relaxed and taking it easy. You don't see stress in people's eyes, which is awesome.

Ummm...yeah...probably I should take that back. Not very surprising a little surprising how Thai people are very relaxed and not as fast passed. I found China, Hong Kong especially very fast passed. They walk fast, think fast, everything is time, time is money. In Thailand I was so surprised not to see that, because people walk slowly, smile, very relaxed, put in forty hours a week, which is totally wow...is this Asia? It is totally one-tenth the speed.

M) Do you think that the background info you received as part of the preparation courses contributed to your cultural experience in Thailand?

Numbers.

Our Thai teacher explained how Thais interact with Thais. It is very different the way Thais interact with Thais and how Thais interact with foreigners. And us being foreigners have to know how they are going to react with us and how we should react to them to try and become to an aspect where we can be interacting at the same level as Thais interact with Thais. So approaching the situation expecting to be treated one way and getting treated a completely different way is kind of frustrating without knowing why that was happening and things like that. So I don't know how you would incorporate this into a course but that would be something....

Numbers

I guess I was expecting more of a culture shock than I got so I guess it made the transition easier. It seems to me that some of the things that were explained might be extreme, but that's about it. I think what our Thai teacher said about Thai culture was true but back when she was there. From what I understand she's lived in the states for like 20 years, something like a long time like that. That's a long time to change. That's comparing now to the early 80's. Things just change. And if you are going to explain culture I think you need to do that with someone who is very current and who lives in Thailand currently or just recently been there at the most last five years.

It might also just be a problem trying to explain culture because if you try to explain American culture to somebody you are going to exaggerate things make them out to not appear to be the same as someone from a different stance. So it could be just very difficult to explain what to expect.

Talking to someone who is current would be good. Our Thai teacher was a very good person, but I mean 'cause of the language aspect. Culturally she wasn't too helpful.

Guest speakers would have been good.

M) Do you have any recommendations or suggestions for the Bangkok preparation courses that you feel would help enhance the cultural experience of future Bangkok participants?

More useful Thai language. I have yet to find the use to say what month it is or say other things. Also for me personally I think that Thai class was too laid back and not taken seriously by me and halfway through I just thought it was for out benefit I didn't know we were getting graded this or anything. So I just didn't pay attention. A few of us got yelled at for joking around in the back of the room. It was just too laid back. It wasn't structured. It was purely just for people who wanted to take advantage of it. If the class was more structured, I think people would be getting more out of it. Now of course that is just me, that is just the way I do things. We have to be taught things we need to say: turn left, turn right, go straight, where is whatever, bathroom, store, where can I get something. The touristy things we need to know was taught at the end where I think it should have been stressed at the beginning. I am just used to something else.

The thing is, and I don't know how reliable my source is, but the thing is if you showed up to every class, our Thai teacher would pass you. So I could have showed up to every class, goofed off in the back, but as long as

my name is on a piece of paper, I'm all set. Where as someone else who had never had experience learning a new language could work their butt off and maybe doing a little better than me but still miss a class and still fail. That's what I am talking about. It's got to be structured correctly and that to me that was not structured.

Class once a week for language is very difficult. And also it seemed like we were running out of time for ID2050. There was not enough time for all the material to be covered. I think something needs to be done to reschedule those so they are not interfering with each other. Do one of those sections in A Term and one in B Term. Not both in the same term. I found at the end of B term, I couldn't care less about Thai class because I was so much more concerned with my PQP and getting that finished that Thai was just a thorn in my side. That really didn't provide value to me. I don't see why ID2050 had to be B term because all you are discussing in that class is more the theory behind how to do these things and it might even be more beneficial to know this stuff before you write it. You would get more of an idea of where things need to go.

Why did the Thai kids have to go to Thai class? I would have understood if they had actually helped teach the class. They wasted two hours of their time. There was no need for them how to learn "hi, how are you?" None. They could have been doing stuff that is much more important. I think it is an insult to keep them in there and teach them like a child teaching things they know like the back of their hands.

Our Thai teacher should spend half the time talking, and half the time with videos and stuff about what it is like here, what Thais do, special holidays, temples etc. So they know what Thai people are like. It would be more interesting. Also, like mentioned earlier, discussion. For ID2050 the two books were useless. I would rather have a guest speaker on interview skills and how to take better notes... For the Thai class, I think that our Thai teacher had too much for you. For the final exam, I think wow, they can't learn this in 14 weeks.

I think what might be more helpful is to practice something more useful other than skits, that's fun, I like that, but I think we should have practiced something more conversational. That is going to be more focused on tourists things like telling the storeowner what you want. Things like that that may be more helpful. And in ID2050 should have more discussion in class. So we can practice how to run a meeting. We were shown how to run a meeting, but we didn't experience this on our own.

M) If given the chance is there anything that you would have done differently at the beginning of C term to enrich your cultural experience? Beginning of B term?

<Silence>

Go see more touristy things. I thought I was going to have more time since I figured I had two months. I figured I just take a random day here and there.

That's what I would have changed.

M) B Term?

I would pay more attention in Thai class. I would take it more seriously. Like I said what we learned, it wasn't all the best choice to teach us but I would have paid more attention.

WPI priorities for us here are, do your IQP and if you happen to get a little cultural on the side, good for you. I don't think that's the way to look at it. You don't spend \$1,000 to fly half way around the world just to do and IQP. I think that they have made some efforts so I won't go to that extreme. We did go to Chaing Mai. But if there was more of a structured way that information could be provided to us, these are places of interest, these are places to go when you have two hours free. Things of that nature, that allow you to experience more and maximize your time, because you don't have a lot of it.

M) Do you feel that interaction with Chula students could have enhanced your cultural experience in anyway? What type of interaction? How could it have enhanced your cultural experience?

Yeah and no. I mean what could they have really done? Beside show us around a couple places. Probably I am not seeing that as the case because we had (the two Thai students on our trip) show us around and maybe I am just taking that for granted not realizing what we could have been missing if those two weren't there. So for me I don't feel I could answer that question accurately because I don't know if I'd miss it or... I don't know...

I think that more interaction with Chula students could only be good. Our group really didn't have any interaction with Thai students. It would have been nice to have some interaction in the project setting. I guess that would be nice because you get to see how the students work and students who work together do things outside of work. Ummm...you don't really do things with our liaisons out side of meeting with them. So I think that students...I mean I don't know what the coolest thing to do around Chula is, and things like that. I think it would be cool to hang out with them. I get to learn things about them and they get to learn things about how I am. There is more culture exchange in that.

The thing I would be concerned about is, just the cultural differences. If there was a Thai student that was assigned to our group to help show us around, we might not even get along. We'll tarnish his view of Americans and he'll tarnish our view of Thais and that might post some big problems. I'm sure they'll be some budding interaction, but it has to be looked at very cautiously. I think working on a project together would be cool. The reason being working together gives us something to automatically talk about. You have something in common right there. With me, when I am meeting someone the first time it is hard for me to start a conversation. Yet if you are working on a project together you have your conversation piece right there, you're there, your forced to be together all the time, conversation has to strike up. That's my take on that...

It might help though...especially if the Chula students want to practice their English and we want to practice our Thai. It takes time. It's kind of hard to come here and try to make friends. It helps if they work on a project with us or if they teach us Thai, but...

M) What could be done in order to enhance interactions between WPI and Chula students before we left? After we arrived?

I think we should have a pen pal program. If you have a buddy in Thailand, that the Global Program arranged, so can write them and meet them when you get there.

I have never had great success with pen pals.

M) What has been some problems?

Just I'm not someone who opens up to others. It would just be so superficial. The more I think about it, if we could increase the number of projects that work in collaboration with Thai students, I think that that is just a more solid way to interact.

Just work on another aspect on the project no on the same project.

M) Any other comments?

Videos would be a good thing to watch before coming over here.

We need more free time here. If I knew that I was going to be working this hard, just going to an office and back everyday, I would have done my IQP in Worcester. What I did not was I spent \$1,000 to fly here \$400 for the room, I pay for my meals everyday. I did a couple of things on the weekend, but other than that...I want to experience Bangkok. Our project doesn't give us the cultural experience I would want. That's just me...

INTERVIEW 7

M) What did you learn in the Bangkok preparation courses about Thailand's culture?

I think we learned a lot of small things like how to do the wai, and not to point your foot, and cultural polite manners. I think after reading more information in "Culture Shock," about Thai culture there's so many details that were left out. And I feel that I should have read them. I should have read that in ID2050, because I feel like I have been doing some things wrong this whole time. And I think part of reason might be that what we truly learned from our Thai teacher, she's Thai so she doesn't think of things that are natural for her so she doesn't think to tell us about something is obvious to her.

I think also for us since we went north and were in the rural parts of Thailand that they don't really see in any westerners and we were the only westerners they see and that they will ever see. That a lot of the small cultural things that we weren't taught in class, even the way you eat, we now realize it was that big of a deal...with the spoon in the right hand and the fork in the left. We got up there and yeah...so I think there is a lot of small things, especially for projects that do a lot of traveling. Things should be made a little more specific for area the groups are headed.

M) You mentioned there were things you found you were doing wrong. Can you give any examples?

Ummm...I was just briefly looking at the book, but the one that stands out the most is when to and when not to use the wai. I just always thought just do it to be polite to everyone and I am pretty much everyone inferior, because I am young and I am a foreigner but that's not how it is and I have been looking ridiculous. And the same thing with saying Korp Khun Ka people here don't say thank you as often as we do at home. So we say it at the oddest times.

I think the biggest phrase we've learned while we've been up north is Mai pen rai and I don't think I understood that concept very well. It's not just a phrase that's coined around. It's literally the way things are handled and passed off. When a meeting running late, it's "mai pen rai." It's everything that ever goes wrong is put under the blanket of mai pen rai. And I don't think we were really taught...I didn't experience it until we actually got up there. I had heard about it like people joking around about it in Bangkok But when we got up there and when we had to schedule meetings and things were not going on time it was always, mai pen rai, there's always tomorrow, don't worry, not need to worry. Even when you think you've done something wrong, mai pen rai. And you don't realize, but that's really the way they treat things.

I think it was stressed a little bit in Thai class, but it should be stress a little more. That you can't ask Thai people for too much. And I think that the advisors whoever is advising that site needs to really be aware of that too. Because we were put in a really awkward position. A situation came up where we were told to ask for something that shouldn't even involve an IQP team. And we had to go to people who are our bosses who we're working for that we were already asking for rides, and email, translating. It should involve advisors. We did end up talking to our liaison about it and they said there is no way you can ask for that. It's too much. It would put them in an awkward position because it is not in their culture to say no we can't help you especially because we are students and farang. So it was just very awkward. I think there needs to be more emphasis on the way Thai people are with the whole mai pen rai attitude but at the same time they are happy with what they have.

The fact that everybody here (Thailand) is so polite you should be really prepared for that and people will just do anything for you or try to do anything for you. Even if they don't want you to do something they will invite you to go around with them. Just be careful to not take too much or accept too much because that will put them in an awkward position it's almost like asking for too much.

Yeah we found that a lot. People would invite us to something or offer us something and we'd be like yeah! Yeah! and take them right up on it and we'd there and realize they weren't really prepared to take us there of to feed us or anything they invited us to do. So we were like just kidding...they really didn't mean it

It was actually kind of weird for me because I was trying to be polite to this one guy and I invited him somewhere expecting him to say no, and he said yes to be polite, I was like "you want to go?" and he was like "yeah..." so I was like alright I am going to get my shoes and I went up for five minutes, hoping he would leave, but he was still there. And he was like alright I'm going to go get my keys we went up for ten minutes,

hoping I would leave, but I was still there. Then we were almost ready to go and he was like “uhhhhh...” and he just disappeared so it just worked out.

M) What surprised you most about Thai culture upon your arrival?

How little they expect of you...to know. They're so westernized. They don't expect you to know any Thai.

When we were up north, they see very little westerners up there so everywhere we go we hear “farang! farang! farang!” It's like we are celebrities. They are taking pictures of us because we are farang. Everywhere we go we are farang. People will try speaking English to us. Which is nice and the people are really friendly...but at the same time it's kind of weird because if you think of the equivalent in the United States it would be so racist to just point and out people by their race. It is almost like insulting to us but at the same time you realize it's not. It's not them. They don't think that way. It's just a little weird.

It's actually kind of funny because I came in with the assumption that everyone around me would be distinguished as farang and no one would do that. And I completely expected it because I have lived in other countries and I know how the different cultures are about westerners. It was funny because no one would say I was a farang because I don't have the physical traits a “typical” farang would have.

I took it for granted that when people asked us where we were from and we said America they wouldn't have to ask any further. It's just weird how they divide up races like that.

Something else that really surprised me was how much all Thai people, even the most uneducated people that we dealt with, know about America and its politics for example. Every place we go, they ask us, “how do you like your president, George Bush?” If that's all the English they know, they know George Bush and president. And it's just amazing to me. It is part of American culture we are very just as Americans focused on ourselves and on our own problems and we don't see the world as it really is. It just really took me back, in Bangkok I kind of expected it because it's more of an international city, they are in contact with farang. They would ask us where we are from and we'd say America and they would ask where in America and we would say Massachusetts and they said oh that's north, that's near New York. And we would say yeah. And you could say to me oh we're going to Lom Pong...oh...well where's Lom Pong? I have no idea. North somewhere?

I really thought it was in the northeast. We were already up there and I thought we were in the northeast, I really did. And then I see this map in the presentation and we were an inch away from Chaing Mai.

Even when we were in the states doing research, we were trying to find out where May Mo was and Lom Pong was or something we could say oh we know we are going in this area. We couldn't find maps that were that detailed.

It just really surprises you on just the conversations people trying to practice their English will start having with you. They started talking about sports and who was in the Super Bowl.

We were like the Super Bowl? Oh I forgot all about it. I don't know what teams are in the Super Bowl do you?

People in the states didn't even know Thailand was having an election. The only reason we knew is because we were here.

My dad thinks I'm in China. <laugh> He was concerned because he didn't think there were any Dunkin Donuts here. It turns out they do.

M) What aspects of your activities have been most culturally enriching? In what way?

Going north just in general. Being away from big cities. Chaing Mai, everyone that went to Chaing Mai and the hill tribes they got to experience just a little bit. But especially when we went up north for the first time as a pretest type thing just to see what we were getting into. It was amazing we went to hill tribes that never saw farang before. Never will see farang again. It's just amazing to actually sit back and observe the way everyone is so close they are not family per say, blood related, but they still look out for everyone.

I think we also had a different perspective than any other group because we got to actually spend time with and actual Thai village and not a hill tribe. Because I think it is very different the hill tribes and the Thai village and the life that they lead.

I appreciate all sorts of artwork and just being able to go to different temples and having that little time before the projects actually started. To actually go and visit those temples and just really get an idea of what the ancestry was like. It's not even like I really have a great sense of it but just being able to see it. Just being able to see those beautiful temples and see what kind of artwork really comes out in such a poor country where you see beggars on the street but yet they have these gold laced temples that they just spent fortunes on. It's just surprising.

I think the friends that we made when we were up north, they were data collectors also working on different projects for our liaisons. They helped us out with translations, and we made friends with them, and we would hang out with them. They were the people that would invite us to go places...sometimes. We would hang out with them and we had so much fun just joking around with them. That's one thing that I think is different than what we learned in Thai class. In Thai class I had this impression that everyone in Thailand is incredibly quiet and polite and so easily offended. I think that is what we concentrated on...trying not to offend people. And then we found they're just the same we are. In a way I found out we aren't really different.

I think a lot of the stuff we learned is hard to put in a classroom setting. Because you just have to be in that situation and in contact with people who haven't been in America.

I almost think that the language aspect of Thai class was almost ridiculous. Because every one of us ended up getting a translation book. Everyone of us had a little phrase book that we would quickly refer to, no matter how good you did in Thai class, there were still things you needed to know when you went out to get a meal or when you went to the store to buy something and think, 'oh how do you say that?' So I think I don't think anyone can grasp the knowledge of a language within a semester especially with the course load we have at WPI. In my opinion the Thai class should be more based on cultural aspects, like mannerisms and clothing you should wear to a meeting, like different kinds of issues like that, like how you address your liaison and how you address the people that work under him. What do you buy for a present? Right now we're in that position where we are trying to figure out what's the best thing to buy, how many people do we buy presents for. Small things like that really make a bigger impact on your whole experience than trying to learn a language in a semester.

I would have to disagree because even the little bit that I got out of Thai class or that we had time to cover in Thai class provided the whole basis for even when you whip out your little phrase book and try to say something. If you just opened this book and tried to say these things, I wouldn't even know what it's supposed to sound like. Even though most people don't feel like they got a whole lot out of it or remember it, we really do need that background information just to have a start. If nothing else, just to encourage you to use phrases. I am really shy about speaking Thai. When I was in France I never spoke French. But I would be even more shy if I didn't stand up and give silly skits in Thai class.

If anything I think it should be more extensive. If not at WPI, then even here. If you practice it here and you have a teacher right there and you come out of the classroom you have more confidence to try and use it. And I like trying to order food in Thai and having conversations with people in Thai.

I also feel that it is really hard to learn any language in such a short amount of time. Especially when you only have class once a week and you have class for so many weeks that you don't have class because of break or something else is going on on a Thursday night or something. So maybe if they extend Thai class A and B Term like they did but A term being focused on the culture aspects and B Term have it focused just on the language. It's a lot because you have ID2050 B Term too, but if ID2050 or PQP could be spread out, and start PQP in A Term as well.

The most useless thing ever was us memorizing the numbers, the actual symbols.

Yeah I really think they should have concentrated more on reading in Thai. When we were up north, it's crazy, there are signs everywhere. Even restroom signs some had pictures but some didn't and we're standing outside of the toilet with no clue. The doors are open to both and they both look the same inside and we are not going to go inside and look for a urinal or something. I think to be able to recognize certain words, like do not enter...

women and men...

I think just getting rid of the whole learning how to write the numbers and just learn a few key phrases would be really useful. Because the numbers, that would be easier to learn on your own. We wrote notes when we were up north in Thai to some people and it just took forever because we had never even seen these characters before we had got into the country.

Maybe if it was just a real general background. Not a whole lot of time spent on memorizing all these characters because that would have been even worse than memorizing numbers. Just so we had some basis so when we referred to our phrase books it would make sense. Just like the language we didn't go into depth much about it but it provided a good background for when you're trying to get around. I thought about buying a book, like "teach yourself Thai." I knew I wouldn't even know where to begin so...

We did spend a lot of time on the numbers if we took the concentration and focus more on letters and characters or certain words or phrases. I would find that a lot more useful.

The reason the numbers aren't useful because our numbers are used everywhere.

As I said it's easier to teach yourself, zero's the same, so a set of 8 numbers or 8 characters or something...

I don't agree with all three of them. I know, in terms of the language, some exposure is better than no exposure. But I feel it was almost completely useless for me because I think the last seven weeks that we are there, B Term is when we have the heavy Thai class. You already have so much you have to concentrate on in terms of your PQP. But if you add any more to that I would definitely be overwhelmed. I was already feeling overwhelmed with having to go to Thai class that other day. I would much rather A Term focus on culture and language and the next term you are able to handle the role of the PQP. I know everybody had a different level of leaning and maybe for them it was easier that way or maybe it would have helped the whole process. For me, I definitely feel it was a complete waste, if I didn't have my phrase book, I definitely would know any Thai.

It would be more useful, from my experience, to have more of the Thai class and less of the PQP. Especially because, I think every group was like this, everything we did in PQP got changed as soon as we got here. Our lit review has been the since B Term and they tell us with two weeks left in the term that they don't like it, we have to reconstruct the whole thing. So I think that if they are going to do that anyway, yeah I think you need a good background of your project, but I think also the language is really important and the culture. You get a lot more out of that. A lot of times the success of your project, not the overall success, but little minor successes depend on culture impressions or language.

Yeah if PQP, is anything of that is going to be useful, you really need an ideal, well defined project. Pretty much everybody had to make major changes C Term.

And it's not just us. It's other WPI kids who go to other project sites.

Our project didn't really change it's definition or scope or anything it's just once you get here you learn more information and realize what is really relevant to your project. I felt really frustrated. And I think all of us do and are still at that point that I just can't deal with it anymore. Stuff that we spent all of B Term stress out over and now with a week and a half left of the project on site we are rewriting our whole entire project. And some projects changed completely, ours didn't change at all. We had an awesome liaison who speaks perfect English and who is always in contact with us, always willing to help us, she's always in and out of our office, so it's not just circumstances with the liaisons.

The formalities of IQP actually took away from what we were actually trying to do and the success of our project as it relates to the community that we were in and our liaison and our sponsor.

M) One of the suggestions you gave was to have less PQP in B Term, but if that meant you'd be doing more of this writing now....

This is my idea. In B Term you just this introductory background information thing. PQP is only 1/6 and you get way more work than even a full class. So if you actually do 1/6 the work, and background information, not so heavy on the writing, working more on other background things like getting to know your group. Maybe if we

had just found sources and stuff but now really done a whole lit review yet. Then you get here and this seven weeks while were onsite we should only be doing data collection. Our liaison is pleased with us but there is one thing she is disappointed about is that we didn't have more time than the three weeks we did to spend talking to people and collecting data. But she understands that the reason we had to come back is that we have so many revisions and drafts and all this technical stuff to do. While there really should be a real easy PQP, then your data collection IQP, and then a post IQP when you get home and that term take up all your writing. So you're not wasting time while you're here. We shouldn't be sitting in our dorms all day doing writing here. I can sit in a dorm at home.

Obviously while we're here, we'll be beginning to write but I think that we shouldn't have all these formal deadlines where you have to have a complete draft of your project two weeks before your leaving the site. And you have to have this presentation and this presentation. I mean the presentations are good. They are very useful. As far as the writing I feel that we've definitely struggled with that. I think a lot of other groups have.

Writing deadlines and things like that are the number one thing that has taken away from my cultural experience. I could have learned so much more from actual life.

I think again that I disagree with all of them. I think that while this has been an extremely ruff time, and it's been hard because you worked so hard during PQP and everything you thought you had defined and you thought you know what you were doing so when you got here, you'd just do data collection. But that's what this whole experience is, you don't know what you're going in for, you don't know what the obstacles are, and it's a learning process along the way. And I think those seven weeks that we have to work on PQP that's when we learn the skills about turning things around quickly, learning how to deal with our advisors, and you learn those skill during those first seven weeks. Right off the bat. If they don't like something, we need to turn it around like this <snap>. Meetings, we need to have agendas at these meetings. We keep forgetting that we're doing a project. While I think the culture aspect is extremely important and that plays a big role in an IQP, after all we are doing a task. I think if it is spread our over three terms where you have one preparatory term, a data collection term, and then a post IQP term, you spend so much time! We're in our second term now and we're sick of it now and I don't even want to think about the IQP ever again when we get back. And that's it! I don't want to do it anymore! If you spend a whole term here just focused on data collection, I'd probably hate the experience altogether. I need something to do. There has been a couple of times I really wished I had a class or something, because there's down time. There's plenty of down time. For us it was different, because we were in a different location. But if we were in Bangkok, and we weren't insolated the way had been, and we had access to cars, phones, and stuff like this, I'm sure the down time was passed by with other cultural activities. But because the way our IQP was set up, I don't think we were able to fully enjoy the experience. I know that everybody has struggled with defining their IQP. But I don't think there's anybody who's going to walk away from here saying they didn't have a cultural experience. I think I would be premature if I said I needed just this term for data collection. I wouldn't change the style in which it is done right now.

I guess a whole term of data collection would be way too much because then you'd have too much information and it would be so hard to organize it into writing. But at the same time, our liaison had brought this up, and made me feel really bad...that if we don't spend more time on data collection then why should they bother investing any time in us if we are not going to spend enough time to give them the time the project deserves and to make it worthwhile. And if we had more time, then the projects could have more of an impact. So many IQPs are almost worthless because they don't do anything, or in the end, what they find is never used for anything. But we could make more of a difference if we had more time to actually do it and not just write about it.

I think a lot gets lot in the formalities or in meeting the requirements for the WPI IQP. It's all the wrong revisions that are involved. We are trying to fit everything, every piece of data in a certain form that can be pushed here. And no body really benefits from it. What purpose does it serve except for us getting a decent and getting a WPI IQP? It should be more flexible. Let the project be what it is. As long as you're meeting the needs of your advisors. They should give the advisors more power or more leeway as to what that should be. Sure it's more work for them, but it really is beneficial to us and the liaisons, and the advisors too- it would give them more free time and not have to read so many revisions.

Although major data collection would be done here, that would be our main focus onsite, at the same time we would be beginning to write our things, we would be getting more information for out literature review, thinking oh this experience would be the perfect way to open the introduction. The methodology, you go and you do what you do, where we need to have an understanding of what it's going to entail before you do it, we write this

whole thing on what we think we're going to do, and then what we end up doing is totally different. And at the same we would have more time to experience the culture. I haven't been to the Grand Palace yet, and it doesn't look like I'm going to get there. All the groups in the past that I have talked to that have come to Bangkok have said that they have had so much free time. They said yeah PQP is hell, but when you get onsite it is so much easier. You do work, do 60 hours a week, you have weekends free, if you work it early in the morning you have evenings free. That's bull. I know all the groups have been complaining. Last year they went to Phuket. This year we can't even go to Phuket. There's no time. Every group is working through the weekend. Every weekend. Our group, we get up before the sun rises, and we stay at the office until dusk and then we come home and eat dinner and then we work some more. It's the first thing we do in the morning and the last thing we do before we get to bed. And the impression that I got from everyone that has gone to these off campus sites that it's not like that and you do have time to experience the culture. And had I know it was going to be this way, I would have definitely made arrangements to come earlier and stay later. So I could have experienced more. We have been mapping out where we want to go, but it's not feasible. I think a lot of it stems from the advisors but at the same time, I think if we had major data collection here and the majority of the writing at another time...

The writing issue... I know that being able to communicate your research findings and being able to make deadlines is a really important skill to learn. We are so concerned by making deadlines at you don't even have any time to sit back and discuss it over before you start writing. You don't have time to brainstorm ideas. You just have to just jump into the writing. You don't have time to think about what's the purpose of this thing or ask if it is even relevant. No. You just have to write. And the quality of our work has suffered because of it.

A lot of the comes from PQP too because if you remember PQP and ID2050, if we spent more time seeing examples of sociological studies, we wouldn't have to do all these stupid drafts. Maybe it's the WPI way just to push you in like that but I felt totally unprepared for writing this project. And back on the free time issue... all I've wanted to do was go to Lumpini Park since I've been here. I tried to go two nights ago and it was 10 o'clock at night and it was closed.

You mentioned ID2050, I think that a lot of that class was extremely useful. Especially, as much as we complained about the information we took from it, the stuff we read in Berg, like good practices in interviewing and focus groups and eliciting truthful responses has been so helpful to our data collection. And we did exercises in brainstorming and group dynamics and all these things that were good side skills for our project. There were some things that were unuseful like Siamese Tragedy was a ridiculous book, we should have been reading "Culture Shock" instead.

I'll be honest I didn't read the books.

I read the "Buddha" book in a day and thought it was really interesting. I don't know about enhancing my experience but personally I was really interested in it and bought more books about it. I read one sentence of Siamese Tragedy and never picked the book up again. Some parts of it were relevant to our project. In general it was about Thai government and history...

They're not relevant to everyone's project...

Our time could have been better spent if things would have been more relevant to our day today life or to our project.

I thought the "Buddha" book was interesting and I really enjoyed reading it but I think that if it had been a book more on the Buddha way of life and instead of the history of the religion... I think it would have been a lot more useful and maybe even more interesting because then we would get interested in how this all evolved.

Even the Buddha book wasn't even that useful here in Thailand because it was all that legend stuff and then there was that little section on actual Buddhism and what the properties are and everything. But even most Thai aren't even really Buddhist it's like an animism almost. It's the Buddhist philosophy and there's what the people actually practice and you don't see that much. I actually found Siamese Tragedy to be somewhat useful to learn about what happened to them, why things are like the way they are in Bangkok, and why there are so many beggars around. I took Intro to Asian Culture and the concentration of that was on southeastern Asia. I learned about the development of the countries, the different ethnic groups that were pushed around throughout history, and how the countries were formed. That was really helpful for me and it really increased my experience even though I really haven't had any free time <laugh>

M) What were aspects of Thai culture that you thought you would experience based on what you learned in your preparation courses? Have you experienced them?

I think when I got to Bangkok, the first week or so, I had a vision that everyone would be like “oh farang!” and chasing you around and everything but it wasn’t like that at all. But then we kind of had the mindset oh whatever we learned about this, it doesn’t really apply. But then we went up north and they loved us because of our height and blond hair and light skin.

People should know before that Bangkok is not Thailand. People should be able to leave Bangkok for an extended period of time and see what it’s actually like.

Even when we went on the weekend trips to Hua Hin and Chaing Mai they were both very westernized, very touristy, areas of Thailand. So I think that it is kind of misleading because I had this impression that Bangkok was going to be so much different from a city in the states like Worcester, and it is different, but it’s not that different “oh my god I don’t even know how I am going to function.” Yeah it’s different just like cities in the states vary from region to region, state to state, area to area, it’s the same thing in Thailand. As stated before, Bangkok is not Thailand, the trips that the school organizes for the weekend are not Thailand.

Talking about the weekend trips...I know there is a lot of people in the Bangkok group that have wanted to get the true Thai experience like going to an actual village, sleeping in a Karen village, or actually being exposed to that cultural aspect. But there should have been an option available to people who didn’t want that aspect. For instance we were up north and we had no hot water and it wasn’t rough living out there but I definitely wanted a few comfortable aspects to come out of that Chaing Mai weekend. And then to go from a ditch to a gutter, that’s a bad way of saying it. But from no hot water and a shower that’s out in the visible area for everyone to watch you, that was something I really didn’t want. And I was really upset that by the fact that I had to go on that trip. I had seen the hill tribes and in fact I thought it was ridiculous for me to go because that was a very touristy hill tribe and it was a complete mockery of what the Thai culture is about. So I was extremely upset that I had to even be exposed to something like that. I would have much rather gone to some beach resort somewhere where I fine I may not be exposed to some of the cultural aspect of it, but I am not going off and living this lie for a day. And the trekking part of it, yeah well there are people who are athletic and people who aren’t athletic. But there are people who don’t feel comfortable walking the entire day walking around in the mountains. I’m not saying that it’s wrong for everybody, but I think there should be an option for those who aren’t interested in that aspect.

I think the two trips were the greatest things that we have done here. Even though I am totally with the wish we didn’t do something so touristy but with a group our size it is kind of hard to find something and plan something, especially if you don’t speak the language, without guides and tourism agencies. But I thought they were the best just because we needed that break from our projects. Even though there were touristy things, we knew that and recognized that, we still did see some of Thailand.

M) If given the chance is there anything that you would have done differently at the beginning of C Term to enrich your cultural experience? Beginning of B Term?

I definitely would have come here a lot earlier. I would made an effort to go around and see the touristy things around Bangkok. I mentioned before that I haven’t gone to the Grand Palace yet. We tried to go a couple of times and just got caught up in the whole tuk-tuk thing. And we were like oh we’ll definitely have time to come back to that and we’ll do this. Now we have a week and a half left and we have to rewrite our whole project and we don’t have time to do that. So I definitely would have maybe traveled a little bit more.

Yeah I totally agree. Yeah same thing I thought two months would be plenty of time to see everything and I didn’t need any extra time. And another thing is, a lot of us have talked about how we should have been able to meet each other before we bought our plane tickets. The reason why I didn’t come early or stay late because I didn’t know a single person in the group so what would I do if I was just hanging out in Bangkok by myself and no one else was here yet? So I guess even one dinner or reception or getting to know you thing might not have been that great but I think we all would have been so excited to get things set up and talk about things that we could have just said to each other, “hey are you going early?” ... “yes I’m going early.” And that would at least

been some knowledge that ok maybe everyone else is going early...I should too. It just would have been a helpful introductory thing back last year. As soon as we got back from Christmas break we could have met.

M) Is there anything that you would have done differently in B Term that could have enhanced your cultural experience?

I think I would have like to learn more about culture. I just kind figured I'd get here and experience it. At the same time I would have liked to have known more about it, even like the art or different aspects. I got here and I was like oh I'd really like know about that...oh I don't have time. It's nice to learn it now, but when I go back, I've already seen it. I think that's something that I would have done on my own and I don't think I would want that to be forced upon me. I think some people that wouldn't apply at all. They're happy with what culture and what they did get out of ID2050 and Thai class and they don't want any more. They're happy with what their getting out of their experience, their time in Thailand. I think it just depends on the individual.

This isn't something I could have done, but I would have liked to known who was in my group long before our first deadline. We found out Tuesday night and we had stuff due on Wednesday. So we did everything back and forth by email. They knew who was going. They should at least give us a few weeks to introduce ourselves.

They should really take into more consideration the way groups are assigned.

It's important that there's a balance.

M) Do you feel that interaction with Chula students could have enhanced your cultural experience in anyway? What type of interaction? How could it have enhanced your cultural experience?

Definitely. I think just being able to socialize with them. Especially for groups that go off site. Just preparing us for how to deal with people our same age. For us, we didn't know what's polite, what's impolite, just common ways of dealing with the same age group. As teenagers we forget all the common things that we do and all the craziness that we go through. But when we are with people from a different culture but the same age group maybe they'll have different experiences, different ways of thinking about things that maybe we should adhere to when we go up north where they are not exposed to as much westernization as the city is.

I've been kind of jealous of the groups that have Thai students in them. Because you always hear about how they took them to this place. If we had people, if nothing else, to show us cool places in Bangkok that are off the beaten track. Maybe there are parts of Bangkok that are really Thailand but we just don't see them because we tend to go where the tourist book tell us to go.

I realized that this was supposed to be the graduate dorm and they changed that at the last minute. They tried to talk about how we got a real since of Bangkok life here. But we are up on these two floors and we're isolated from everything in these ivory towers with the room service and everything else, but we really are kind of isolated. I wish we were staying with Thai students and say "hey where do you drink?" and "where do you hang out?" and "what should we go see besides the Grand Palace?"

I think it would have been useful to have someone show us places and show us how to use the sky train and stuff like that.

I realize that that would be a real good cultural experience, to live with Thai students, but then we would have missed out on this experience of just living with eachother and getting to know people from WPI.

I think it would have been cool to be in a dorm maybe all together like we are now but in a dorm that had a lot of other Thai students. Because I see no one in this dorm besides us. Even people that we do see are farang. Even if we were spread out on a few floors, we would have interaction with Thai students and could bring them back to the group.

I think it is good to stay together at least some amount because if nothing else because we provided a really good support group for each other because we were all going through the same IQP deal.

I think if we were in a dorm with other Thai students, it wouldn't be detrimental at all. It would be much more beneficial. It's just cool to meet people.

M) What could be done in order to enhance interactions between WPI and Chula students before we left? After we had arrived?

Pen-pals. Or have maybe one or two Thai students assigned per group. Maybe not pick us up at the airport, but find out when we are arriving. I am sure that would be anxious to meet us and talk to us and develop English because that's what we ran up to up north. I don't know if you want to do it per group or how you could do it because I having individual on individual is kind of rough.

I think we presume that Chula students would want to hang out with us. I know a lot of them do, and I see them and they like interacting with us. Pen pals, I think is a good way to do it but if we take it any further than that in terms of the first meeting, we're already imposing culturally on them quite a bit. I don't know how feasible it would be for us to expose ourselves on them that much. Because sometimes will do things that are rude and we don't even know it because we don't know what all the customs are right off the bat. So sometimes you do things and you don't realize it. So I think that if we have a Thai person with you all the way through, they would see things and maybe even get offended. So while I think the idea is good, I think it can go both ways. It would have to be carefully monitored.

I think what I was talking about was having Chula students volunteer. It would be people interested in getting to know about American culture and practicing their English and they would have to realize that we would be doing the same with them. I think that you could find the volunteers.

It could even be an English class at Chula. Either as a volunteer thing or as an assignment. It doesn't have to be a forced thing. It could be pen pals and a meet you pen pal dinner when we first get here. After that, it would be up to you and the person to show as much interest in each other as you want. It would at least set up something and provide a basis for a relationship.

I personally wouldn't want to use that. I'd be too afraid of offending people. What I know about Thai culture now is not what I knew in B Term. I'd be worried about offending people to the point where I would want to email them. If we met people in the dorm. If we were on campus with other people. Most of the college students here know at least a little English. It's better that way so you can approach people and they can approach you and it's not just "here you're stuck with you."

I think if we did do the email thing, we would have to have a better understanding of the culture so we don't offend people.

APPENDIX D: WPI FOCUS GROUP CONTENT ANALYSIS

| Themes | opinions | # | Interview ... |
|--------------------------|----------------------|---|---|
| 1) Things Learned | general | 2 | things that were explained were too extreme, formal |
| | cultural | 2 | we learned how to wai |
| | | 1 | you're supposed to laugh at people when they fall down |
| | | 1 | how not to offend people |
| | | 1 | cultural polite manners |
| | | 3 | not to point your foot |
| | | 1 | even if they don't want you to come, they will invite you to do something |
| | | 1 | history. Current politics, IMF/World Bank |
| | | 4 | respect |
| | Thai words for... | 1 | date, time |
| | | 1 | food |
| | | 4 | numbers |
| | | 1 | say you don't speak Thai |
| | Thai phrases | 1 | Khawp khun (khrap/ka) |
| | | 2 | Mai pen rai |
| | social science | 1 | social hierarchy |
| | untrue | 1 | girls dress conservatively |
| | | 1 | dropping wallet - people are going to take your belongings |
| | | | if you want to joke around, say that Thai people are fat - you never make fun of how people |
| | | 1 | look or their nationality |
| | | 1 | Bangkok is different than anything we have ever seen |
| | | 1 | men say kap not krap |
| | taught but never use | 1 | today, tomorrow, times |
| | | 1 | months |
| | | 2 | writing the symbols for the Thai numbers |

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| 2) Things learned in Thailand | people | 1 | can't ask people for too much |
| | | 1 | everyone in Thailand is so polite, they will do or try to do anything for you |
| | | 1 | can't take too much or accept too much. It puts Thai people in an awkward position |
| | | 1 | people are relaxed |
| | Bangkok | 1 | Bangkok is not Thailand |
| | philosophy | 1 | "Mai pen rai" is the way things are handled and passed off. When things going wrong it is put under the blanker of "mai pen rai" |
| 3) What was most surprising | Bangkok | 4 | sanitation was a little iffy |
| | | 1 | I was scared to eat some of the food. I am used to having everything tucked away, not out in the open |
| | | 1 | crazy traffic |
| | | 1 | commercialism |
| | people | 3 | how little they expect you to know. Don't expect you to know Thai language or customs |
| | | 1 | enthusiasm for westerners- it's like we're celebrities |
| | | 1 | how much they know about America and it's politics |
| | | 1 | how much they know about the states within America and their relative location |
| | | | the conversations people will start having with you so they can practice their English - Super |
| | | 1 | Bowl, George Bush |
| | | 1 | people are relaxed |
| | | | recently I have noticed Thai people to be pretty rude. They cut in front of you on the escalator and stuff like that and push you out of the way on the sidewalk |
| | | 1 | escalator and stuff like that and push you out of the way on the sidewalk |
| | | 2 | hospitality from people who had so much less than we do |
| | | 2 | friendly |
| | | 2 | laughing and smiling |
| | culture/language | 1 | Asian though process |
| 4) Expectations based on Prep course | realized | 1 | |

| | | |
|--|-----------------------------|---|
| | not realized | <p>1 people really do smile all the time 1 expected everyone would be surprised to see farang-that was not the case in Bangkok, but 1 it was in the hill tribes 1 ice cream on hotdog bun 1 stuff for sale is quite cheap 1 people will take advantage of foreigners 1 people are more relaxed, harder to get things scheduled 1 expected a different planet by what was explained-realized it's not so different</p> <p>1 more of a culture shock 1 leaving food on plate and girls don't wear tanktops 1 conservative - crossing legs, pointing feet, dressin conservatively 1 more active Buddhism - reflective in everyday life</p> |
| 5) Negative experiences/impressions | group trips | <p>1 writing deadlines have taken away from cultural experience</p> <p>3 Hua Hin and Chaing Mai were both very westernized 1 Organized trips were not Thailand upset that I had to go on the trip- it was ridiculous to go to the touristy hill tribe because it was a complete mockery of what the Thai culture is about. 2 1 we're not seen as westerners, just money</p> |
| 6) What part of the trip was most enriching | <p>travel</p> <p>people</p> | <p>2 Chaing Mai. Getting to spend time with those kids 1 going north. Being away from big cities amazing to go to hill tribes that have never seen farang before and never will see farang again 1 staying in an actual Thai village going to different temples, seeing the artwork, getting a sense of what their ancestry was like 1 3 friends we had made, we had so much fun joking around with them</p> <p>1 seeing people barter 1 we found out we weren't so different from them 3 interaction in general</p> |

| | | | |
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| | religion | 1 | Thailand is a very Buddhist religion |
| | other | 1 | soccer game |
| | | 1 | saw it's not so different |
| | | 1 | structure of buildings |
| 7)Thai Class | in general | 2 | ridiculous, almost completely useless it's hard to learn a language in such a short time |
| | things that were useful | 1 | provided a basis for when you whip out our phrase book, background information gave us a start |
| | | 1 | lesson one and two were fairly helpful. Being able to say who you are and nice to meet you. |
| | things that were lacking | 1 | should have been more specific to the area groups are headed |
| | | 1 | concentration on reading Thai - recognize certain words |
| | | 1 | a lot of small cultural things, like the way you eat with a fork and spoon |
| | | 1 | structure |
| | | 1 | current information about culture |
| | lacking useful words for | 1 | dirrections- left, right, straight |
| | | 1 | where can I get something? |
| | | 1 | tourist language in general |
| | | 1 | how to order food |
| | | 1 | how to barter |
| 8) ID2050 | things that were useful | 2 | guest speaker |
| | | 2 | interviewing techniques and social research |

| | | | |
|--|--------------------------|----------------------------|--|
| | things that were lacking | | didn't help with interactions with Thai people geared more towards research papers and not culture |
| 9) Both Prep Courses | | | wasn't enough time to cover all the material to be covered |
| 10) Books/Reading | in general | 1 3 1 1 | I didn't read the books books not useful did not prepar culturally were never discussed |
| | Buddha | 2 2 1 2 | interesting wasn't useful because it was about the legend and not current practices The Buddha book was not about Buddhism, it was about Buddha's life unnecessary |
| | Siamese Tragedy | 1 1 2 1 3 1 | ridiculous book read one sentence and never picked the book up again some parts were relavent to our project not relevant to everyone's project somewhat useful to learn what happened to them, why things are like they are in Bangkok, and why there are so many beggars. poorly written can't find the info in book- tried to find his sources and where he got his numbers - coul'n't find |
| | suggested reading | 1 2 1 | Culture Shock could have read a book on the Buddhist way of life instead of the history of the religion interviewing technique book would be more helpful |
| 11) Recommendations and Suggestions | | | |

| | | | |
|---|--|---|---|
| Thai class | 1 6 2 4 3 3 1 1 1 1 2 1 | <p>increase the number of classes</p> <p>focus on language that is more useful</p> <p>more emphasis on Thai class</p> <p>have Thai kids come to class once or twice a month. Ones that have recently been in Thailand. They could teach things such as Thai lifestyle, how to order, etc. There are a lot of Thai kids at WPI. It wouldn't be hard to get some to volunteer</p> <p>use class time more effectively - half culture, half Thai language</p> <p>learn to recognize characters for a few key phrases- a general background</p> <p>should be based more on cultural aspects</p> <p>focus on language and culture in A term PQP in B</p> <p>have more Thai class less PQP</p> <p>maybe even have a Thai class a Thai class in Bangkok</p> <p>show videos on what it is like in Thailand - what Thais do, special holidays, temples, etc.</p> <p>have monk come in</p> | |
| ID 2050 | 1 2 1 2 2 | <p>spread it out over both terms</p> <p>more emphasis. ID2050 didn't cover all that much</p> <p>have A Term and B Term</p> <p>more discussion</p> <p>guest speakers</p> | |
| books/reading | 1 | same information as Siamese Tragedy but different book | |
| meeting past BBKrs | 3 1 | <p>get interaction with people who have gone - a few times</p> <p>interaction was beneficial</p> | |
| map | 3 | in the beginning of the immediate area, bus routes, restaurants | |
| 12) In retrospect, things done differently | free time | 5 3 1 | <p>would have made an effort to go see more touristy things</p> <p>thought I would have time to do everything</p> <p>traveled more at the beginning</p> |
| | preparations | 5 2 2 | <p>would have come here a lot earlier</p> <p>learned more about culture on my own before coming here</p> <p>stayed a week later</p> |

| | | | |
|--|----------------------|----------------------------|--|
| | project | 1 | picked project outside of Bangkok |
| | prep classes | 1 | paid more attention in Thai class |
| | other | 2 | met more Thai people |
| 13) Motivations for interaction with CU students? | social | 2 5 1 1 1 2 | socialize with them they could show us around basketball game meeting when we get here - give us heads up soccer game best times had are with Thai people |
| | cultural benefits | 1 1 4 1 1 1 | prepare us for dealing with people our own age teach us what's polite, what's impolite they could develop their English and we could practice our Thai provides a basis for a relationship meet more Thai people learn thing about them, they learn things about me |
| | project | 1 2 | every group should have a Thai kid assigned to it Chula students could help with interviewing and setting up focusgroups |
| | university relations | 1 1 1 | wanted to spend more time on campus with Thai peole want to be involved in the University curous to see what the Chula educational philosphy is |
| | optional? | 1 1 | activities have to be optional most people will go anyway |
| | problems | 1 | we might tarnish their view of Americans and they might tarnish our view of Thais- if we don't get along |

14) Recommendations for increasing interaction

| | | |
|-------------------|---|---|
| Worcester | 7 | pen pals |
| | 1 | student exchange |
| Bangkok | 5 | stay with Thai students in a dorm- a good cultural experience |
| | 1 | have two Thai students assigned to each group |
| | 1 | English class could meet with us as a volunteer thing or as an assignment |
| | 2 | meet pen pals |
| | 1 | increase the number of projects that work in collaboration with Thai students |
| | 6 | activities- soccer game, cookout, etc. |
| email suggestions | 3 | have CU students sign up to meet Americans |
| | 1 | maybe a webform so we don't get paired off with one person |
| problems | 2 | individual on individual is kind of rough |
| | 1 | imposing culturally- we can be rude without meaning to |
| | 2 | it would have to be carefully monitored |
| | 1 | Chula students would have to volunteer |
| | 1 | if we did email we would have to have a better idea of the culture so we don't offend |