

Lily Falzon

Graduation Year: Senior

College: Arts & Letters

Major(s): Sociology

Minors(s): Chinese

Scholar Group Membership: MSPS

Did you received other funding for this project?: Liu Institute

Could you have completed this project without CUSE funding? No

More details on CUSE funding assistance?

Project Title: Conflicting Methodologies and Cross-Cultural Validation: Investigating the Current State of Traditional Chinese Medicine

Project Location: China (Guangzhou, Shanghai, Hangzhou, Hong Kong)

ND Faculty Mentor: Dr. Ayesha Ahmad (Notre Dame London Global Gateway) - previously Dr. David R. Gibson (Dept. of Sociology)

Project Type: Research

Why did you undertake this project/experience? Deepen your knowledge of a topic or issue, Research/experience necessary for senior thesis or capstone project, Prepare for graduate school (MA or PhD), Prepare for national fellowships, Career discernment and/or preparation, Internationalize your Notre Dame experience

Did your funded experience help you:

[Deepen your understanding of your coursework or field of study]: Very Much

[Discern your interests and post-bac goals]: Very Much

[Become confident in your ability to set and achieve your goals]: Very Much

[Gain a more nuanced view of local, national, or global communities]: Very Much

[Improve your written and verbal communications skills]:Very Much

Tell us about your experience.

This July, I spent two weeks in Hong Kong conducting preliminary thesis research on China and Hong Kong's medically pluralistic healthcare system, specifically focusing on the experiences of traditional Chinese medical practitioners in the face of Western medicine's dominance. I interviewed four Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) doctors and one clinic manager, visited four different TCM clinics, explored the TCM hospital and pharmacy located at the Hu Qing Yu Tang (pharmaceutical company) headquarters, and received guided tours of two herbal markets by local Chinese.

My research methods succeeded in improving my understanding of how TCM operates within China and Hong Kong's overall healthcare system and the many layers to TCM which exist in Chinese society today. My research succeeded in assessing a few of the methodological barriers to complete integration, but also investigated the negative stigma surrounding TCM and

many of the social circumstances which limit peoples' access to TCM. A lack of insurance coverage, limited availability of TCM practitioners, and an education which mandates Western medical training all supports the notion that TCM and Western medicine have a hierarchical relationship despite the governments' attempts at providing them with equal footing for care. The main finding is that China's integration of these two systems has foreseeable negative consequences for TCM, namely the seemingly inevitable transformation of this historical system into a vessel for providing culturally sensitive Western medical care, making the coexistence employed by Hong Kong a more desirable solution for medically pluralistic societies.

I spent the following two weeks traveling through mainland China, stopping in Guangzhou, Shanghai, and Hangzhou to study the political influence of my great-grandfather, Wang Xiaolai. He served as the Chairman of Shanghai's Chamber of Commerce and was one of Shanghai's most influential businessmen during the 1930's. However, beyond his economic sphere of influence, Wang Xiaolai was known for providing the funds to support the armies of Jiang Jieshi (Chiang Kai-Shek). While this information is widely known throughout Shanghai and China, the influence and importance of Wang Xiaolai during Shanghai's Golden Era is unknown in the West. Thus, my research partner, Enle Lien, and I visited the public libraries of Shanghai to read up on Wang Xiaolai in texts that have been available for decades but simply have not been translated to English. We located a copy of a book solely dedicated to the life of Wang Xiaolai written by one of his sons as well as a copy of his family's genealogy. We also visited his home in old Shanghai, his grave in the Chinese Martyrs' Cemetery, and his vacation home in Hangzhou to learn more.

This project succeeded in unearthing a vast amount of information which preliminary research - texts written by Western academics - failed to convey. One of our main findings was that Wang Xiaolai and Jiang Jieshi's initial friendship stemmed not from their careers but from their families, as it is hypothesized that Wang Xiaolai's sister paid for Jiang Jieshi's education as a boy. However, as the Chinese Civil War drew near, disagreements regarding whether or not to focus more extensively on the Communist Chinese forces or the Japanese invasions to the north ended the longstanding positive relationship between these two families.

Describe the impact this project had, both on you as a student-scholar and on the people you worked with.

Currently, China is one of the only countries in the world to maintain an integrated system of healthcare, where both a traditional form of medicine and Western medicine maintain equal status from the government's perspective. Investigating the detailed workings of this system and the current relationship between these two forms of medicine provides us with the information we need to analyze how health care practitioners can better provide patient-centered care.

The impact of my project on Wang Xiaolai is vast, as all past research on this historical figure has been limited to Chinese academic circles. However, it is impossible to understand Shanghai and the Guomintang Government on the eve of the Chinese Civil War without understanding the history and influence of one of Jiang Jieshi's largest benefactors. My project on Wang

Xiaolai brings information of his influence to the West for the first time.

My experience engaging with TCM practitioners in their clinics, touring markets, and visiting hospitals and pharmacies has taught me more than I could have possibly learned in the classroom. Furthermore, speaking only Chinese for weeks on end has improved my Mandarin language skills tremendously. Beyond academia, this trip - like every trip I make to China - had a major impact. It allowed me to reconnect with my Chinese roots and to grow as both a student and a person.

Describe how this experience is connected to your plans as a student or future professional.

Not only is my research on Chinese medicine serving as the basis for my thesis, but it has also informed the structure of the project I developed in applying for a Fulbright research grant and solidified my desire to pursue higher education in the field of global health following graduation. I hope to present my findings at Notre Dame's annual Human Development Conference next spring and the Undergraduate Scholar's Conference in May.

What advice would you give other students who are planning to pursue similar projects?

My Top 5 Tips for Future World Travelers:

1. You don't need to always have a plan. Sometimes things fall apart and allowing the future to develop spontaneously can leave you in the best of circumstances.
2. You can never have enough photos.
3. Live like a local. The best decision I made on this trip was to accompany my relatives as they went about their daily lives. I learned about abandoned piers with the best views of Kowloon, about hidden rooftop restaurants and urban hiking trails, but also about Hong Kong's housing crisis and unseen poverty. Which leads me to my next tip.
4. If you leave a city believing it to be nothing short of paradise, than you haven't seen enough of that city. Every country has its own problems. Talk to the people around you about their experiences living there. You'll soon realize that the world is complex and not nearly as large as you initially thought.
5. Be cognizant of time. Even if you dedicate three weeks to one travel destination, you won't be able to see everything. The solution isn't to extend your stay necessarily, but to use what time you have wisely.
6. Bonus tip: Take a break. You deserve it.

I acknowledge that this form has been filled out truthfully and to the best of my ability. I understand that this information will be shared with many different CUSE constituencies. As such, I have provided as much useful information as I was able. I understand that CUSE will not complete my award disbursement until this form is successfully completed. If I have any questions or concerns, I will contact CUSE before submitting this form. To illustrate that you understand all of these points, please enter your Notre Dame email in the box below.

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