I propose doing a comparative descriptive project looking at the inclusion of traditional medicine into the modern health system of the five countries I will have visited for extended periods of time during my four undergraduate years. I will have traveled to Mongolia, Mexico, India, China, and South Africa for no less than one month each. I have already completed work in Mongolia and Mexico and will travel to the final three during the spring of 2006.

In each country I will compile an ethnographic description of the extent of integration in each society. Within each country I will attempt to detail the crossover of medical systems from three distinct perspectives. First, I will work closely with government officials in order to understand the government’s official programs involving traditional medicine including but not limited to how they are financed, structured, and implemented into the community. Second, I will speak with practitioners of both traditional and biomedicine to note the level of cooperation on the ground between the two medical systems. This can often be quite telling as successful integration at this level often determines the success in the country as a whole. Third and finally, I will look at the use of both systems by patients. I will meet with health consumers to understand their personal feelings on integration and their patterns of use of both systems. This comprehensive detailed description will give me a good grasp on how the idea and implementation of integrated medicine has permeated society at each level.

I expect the results to provide readers with an interesting and useful comparative work on traditional medicine integration. From the research I have already completed I suspect the five countries I have chosen will provide a good overview of the various ways a country may successfully utilize traditional medicine as another healthcare resource within their health system.

This type of comparative overview of integrated healthcare systems will be an invaluable resource within the field of international medicine. The power of traditional medicine is only slowly being realized by modern government. Each country has approached integration in a unique way specific to their historical, geographic, and cultural norms. This has resulted in a patchwork of programs all with varying levels of success. Projects of this nature will allow researchers and public health officials to highlight the positive aspects of certain programs while concurrently noting failed projects that could be avoided by other nations.

I am poised to personally benefit from this research in my career as an international health worker. I hope to eventually work in public health program development for developing nations. This cross-cultural study will give me the experience and knowledge to be able to assist in designing and implementing programs that utilize all available health resources within a country.