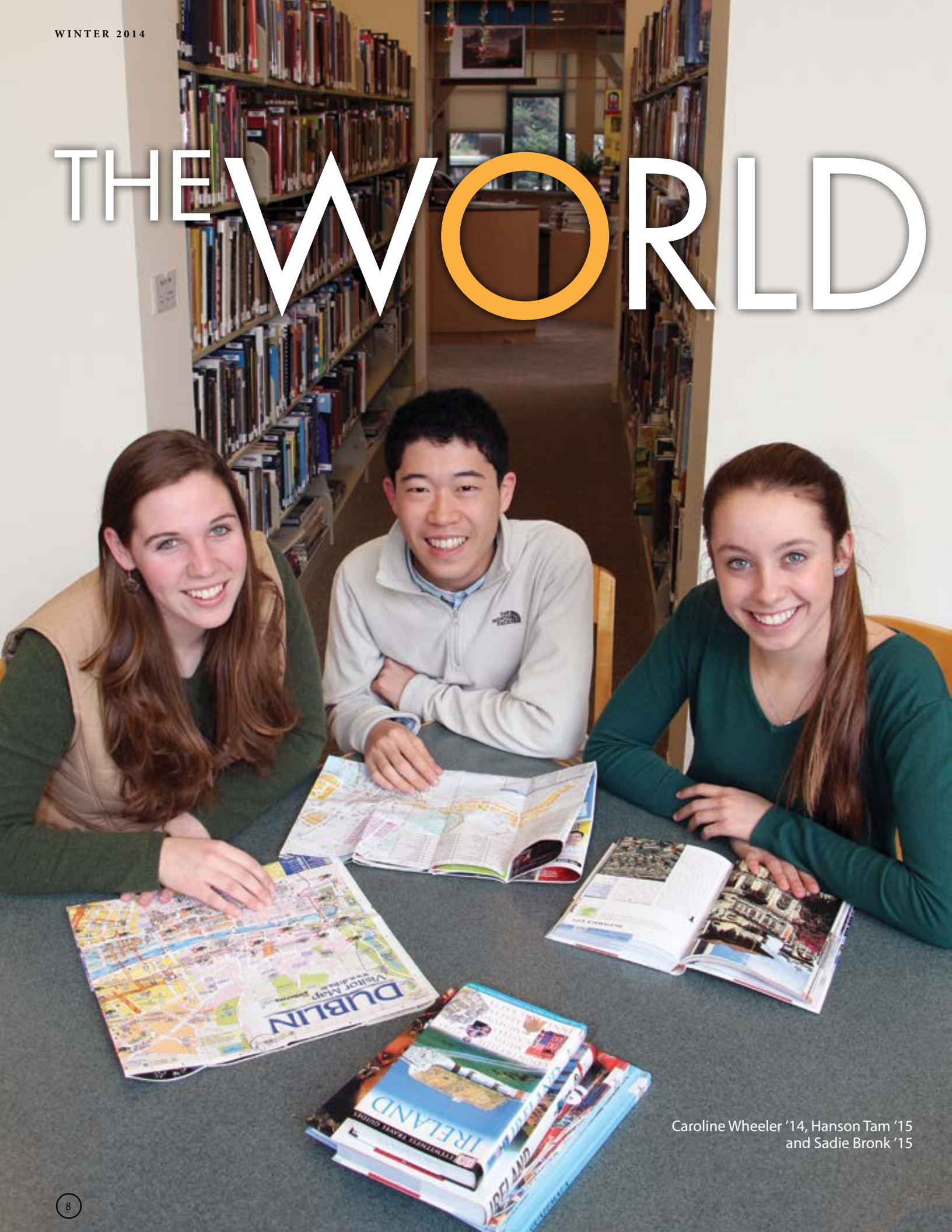


THE WORLD



Caroline Wheeler '14, Hanson Tam '15
and Sadie Bronk '15

IS THEIR CLASSROOM



How does Singapore contribute to the global understanding of democracy? How do Celtic and Bluegrass music affect national or regional cultural identities? How do indigenous women in Guatemala experience their work with a fair-trade cooperative?

Big questions, right?

To dive deeply into those questions necessitates more than research in the library (as good as the Menlo Library is) or on the Internet. To answer questions like these, you have to experience things firsthand. You need to see parliament in action. You need to play Celtic music with Irish musicians. You need to talk with Guatemalan women as they weave their handbags. You have to get out of the chair and into the world.

Sadie Bronk '15, Hanson Tam '15 and Caroline Wheeler '14 do not stay in the chair. These three, all accomplished students and HAND Foundation Fellows, traveled across the globe to find answers to their big questions.

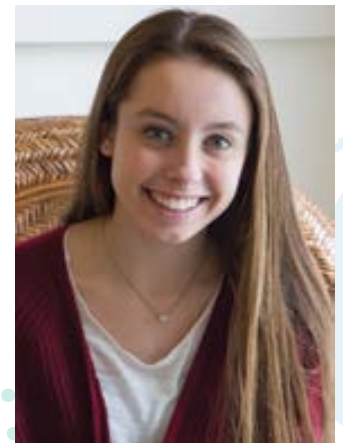
The HAND Foundation's mission includes preparing and engaging the next generation for our increasingly complex world. The HAND Foundation Summer Travel Fellowship, generously supported by the Foundation for four years, funds selected Menlo students to undertake an in-depth investigation, scholarly research or a social entrepreneurship project. It's not easy to become a Fellow: a competitive application process demands that students show initiative, maturity, and a spirit of inquiry and curiosity. As Upper School Director John Schafer explains, "The opportunity is a key part of Menlo's burgeoning global program offerings." Menlo's inaugural Fellows traveled to Singapore, Ireland and Nashville, and Guatemala, challenging themselves with travel logistics, cultural sensitivities, language barriers and deep scholarly explorations.



Woman to Woman

Sadie Bronk '15 sits in the small community of

Chuacruz in the Sololá region of Guatemala, speaking with Patrona, an indigenous woman. While Sadie knows some Spanish, Patrona speaks a native dialect, and the two struggled to converse through a translator.



Sadie Bronk '15

Patrona is a textile artist for Mercado Global, a non-profit organization in Guatemala that connects women's cooperatives to retailers around the world, providing financial stability that enables the women to send their children to school and lift their families out of poverty. Sadie had previously raised money for a new computer lab in a rural Guatemalan school and chose to intern with Mercado Global for her HAND Foundation Fellowship. Through her conversations with Patrona and several other artisans, Sadie hopes to document these women's experiences and the impact the organization has had on their lives.

Sadie and Patrona's conversation starts out slowly: Patrona is hesitant to open up, and Sadie is nervous. But soon they're able to have an honest conversation about Patrona's values and her work with Mercado Global. Through her conversations with several artisans, Sadie learned that they feel Mercado Global has had a great impact on their lives and they are better able to provide for their children's needs. Yet they worry that Mercado Global still does not order enough of their handiworks for them to have financial success.

PHOTO COURTESY MERCADO GLOBAL



Sadie Bronk '15 (in blue t-shirt) leads the mother-daughter trip

Sadie also developed, planned and led a trip to Guatemala for a group of American mothers and their daughters that allowed women from both countries to learn about each other's lives.

“Even though they come from such different backgrounds, the mothers here and the mothers there still share the same values.”

Sadie interviewed the American mothers and daughters as well and compared the two groups. She writes, “Even though they come from such different backgrounds, the mothers here and the mothers there still share the same values. They both think their children are important, that education is important.” When asked about their goals for the future, however, Guatemalan women described their goals for their families, while the U.S. women focused on their personal goals. Sadie argues that this is not because the American women don't care about their families, but rather that they have more opportunities for both themselves and their family members to succeed, while Guatemalan women may not have these opportunities.

Her work in Guatemala taught Sadie an important lesson. “We live in this incredible place,” Sadie declares. “You can't focus just on what's right around you. It's not just about you and your life and your problems. Some people are facing much bigger problems than you, and we need to help them.”



The HAND Fellows with John Schafer and HAND Foundation Executive Director Radha Blackman and President Noosheen Hashemi



Shared Songs

When Caroline Wheeler '14 walked off the plane in Dublin, Ireland, she was overwhelmed. She had never traveled alone before, and she wasn't even sure she could find the right bus to the hostel. But Caroline, an accomplished singer, wanted to learn about Celtic music, and she knew the best way to do that was to go directly to the source.

As someone of Irish descent, Caroline had long identified with Celtic traditional (“trad”) music, and she learned from a choir director that Bluegrass music is related. What, she wondered, is the nature of the relationship between the two genres? Do people in Ireland and Appalachia identify with these genres?

Caroline's research included interviewing music scholars and musicians in Dublin and Nashville. She attended the *Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann*, a festival of contemporary Irish music in Derry. “I fell easily into the role of music student,” she writes, “participating in formal classes, observing fiddlers' camp and attending informal public sessions.” And she worked with the Bluegrass in Schools program in Nashville.

Perhaps the most lively part of her research was a “pub crawl” in Dublin (no ale for Caroline, of course!). With musicians as guides, she and fellow tourists stopped in a series of pubs to hear “real” band sessions—she was even invited to sing at one. Her research explores the technical aspects of the two genres—types of scales, ornamentation, instrumentation, vocal techniques and the like—marking the transplantation of Celtic themes, tones and techniques to American “roots” music, specifically to Bluegrass in Appalachia.

Trad music became a symbol of Irish nationalism in the face of British oppression, Caroline explains, but it has also been used by the tourist industry to portray a stereotypical image of the Irish. Is traditional Irish music central to cultural identity? Caroline argues, “In terms of the Irish national image as presented by the tourist industry, the answer clearly is ‘yes... In terms of the

“It's important not only to listen to music but also to understand it.”



Caroline Wheeler '14

majority of Irish, the answer is more nuanced. Few Irish devote enough time and energy to playing trad music to make it truly a significant marker for their daily sense of identity.”

Bluegrass emerged more commercially, in response to performance opportunities at the Grand Ole Opry. As a more regional genre, it may be a stronger mark of identity, particularly for rural Appalachian communities. Yet it is often stereotyped as “hillbilly” or Southern white music, which neglects its rich cultural heritage of mixing Irish trad, African-American blues and cowboy Western sounds.

Caroline’s venture into the world of musicology has prompted a desire to learn more. “People love listening to music but have no idea where it comes from,” she says. “It’s important not only to listen to music but also to understand it, to see how history has influenced different genres and how they connect across cultures.”



The Will of the People

In America, we have a very specific idea of what democracy is: a two-party system, a bicameral legislature, freedom of speech. Hanson Tam ’15, however, argues that the idea of “democracy” must now move beyond our own to include a global perspective.

To gain this perspective, Hanson looked at the city-state of Singapore. Known for its restrictions on personal and civil liberties and its punishments for minor infractions, Singapore also boasts high living standards and one of the least corrupt governments in the world. What, Hanson wondered, is the relationship between Singapore’s form of government and its success and stability? To what extent is Singapore a true democracy? How should “democracy” be defined?

In Singapore, Hanson watched Parliament in action and interviewed both a government Member of Parliament (MP) and an opposition MP, along with civil servants and educators. Because of Singapore’s continued restrictions on freedom of speech, some people he met asked to remain anonymous.

Singapore is a parliamentary republic ruled, since its independence, by the People’s Action Party (PAP) with a supermajority in the unicameral Parliament. Yet the government and its form of democracy have evolved over the years. Hanson divides the history of Singapore’s government into three periods.

In the first period, the fledgling country struggled for survival, with a lack of resources and economic uncertainty. The government strictly limited freedoms in order to unify and stabilize the country. Hanson argues, “In the context of



Hanson Tam ’15 at Singapore’s Parliament

hard times and widespread illiteracy, the people let the government assume control of almost everything, resulting in a relatively undemocratic but likely necessary period of Singapore’s history.”

In the second period, Singapore had become more stable, and “the core principle of government shifted to the idea of pragmatism,” Hanson explains. The government began to relax its grip and made electoral changes to allow for more equality. While Hanson questions the democratic principles of some of these changes, he argues that they demonstrate progress and “exemplify Singapore’s experimental and novel approach to democracy.”

“There are many different degrees of democracy. Each is tailored to its own needs, its own culture and its own people.”

In the third, and current, period, the focus of government transitioned from practical matters to an idea of the “emotional connection” between citizens and their government. As education and exposure to different perspectives have increased, the government has in turn become more open and sensitive to its people’s wishes. While restrictions remain, citizens can now express their views and help shape policy.

Hanson concludes that “Singapore is most definitely a democracy. Even if its implementation limits equality and freedom to a certain extent, the country has changed over the years to serve the needs of its people.” In fact, he now argues that we can extend the idea of democracy to any system in which the will of the people is ultimately reflected without much violence or revolution. “There are many different degrees of democracy,” he explains. “Each is tailored to its own needs, its own culture and its own people.”

As our students move through the Menlo campus, they undertake great learning and exploration. And their learning takes place beyond the confines of campus. As our HAND Foundation Fellows have shown, the world is their classroom.