

While I spent only three weeks, in July 2015, at the University of the Western Cape, it was a vital component to my field research in South Africa. UWC both generated new data for my dissertation and deepened my theoretical understanding of my existing data. My experience interacting with faculty at UWC began in October 2014. The University of Missouri Department of Physics knew of my upcoming research in South Africa, and introduced me to two physicists, Drs. Christopher Arendse and Franscius Cummings, who were conducting research in Columbia. While I have no background in the physical sciences, Drs. Arendse and Cummings kindly met with me and discussed logistics, departments, libraries, and research in both Cape Town and South Africa. Their advice allowed for a smooth transition to South Africa.

In Bellville, I stayed at the Tyger Valley hotel, approximately 20 minutes from UWC. I was fortunate to stay with a faculty member from the Department of Education. My colleague had a car, although I found that Cape Town is easy to navigate with Uber. Minibus taxis, my main form of transportation in Gauteng and the North West, was not a practical option with my time constraints. I do, however, highly recommend this to students with more time, as it allows for a more nuanced understanding of the country.

I am fortunate to be able to compare living in the Western Cape to Gauteng and the North West provinces. In general, I found Cape Town to be a much more laid-back and friendly city than Johannesburg. In both Johannesburg and Cape Town, I stayed near the university in relatively affluent suburbs. In Cape Town, however, the streets were clean and I felt much safer. Safety is perhaps the principle consideration in South Africa, so I was relieved to “breathe” a bit in Cape Town. While I had a wonderful experience at the University of Johannesburg, I would very strongly recommend Cape Town over Johannesburg for international studies and research. Cape Town provides equal resources as Johannesburg, but the UM/UWC partnership provides a strong network with easier access to research materials. The stronger capacity of the Western Cape promises higher success with the inevitable logistical experiences one faces abroad.

In addition, Cape Town provides more leisurely activities than Johannesburg. The stunning beauty of the Western Cape is unparalleled. While in Cape Town, I was fortunate to experience both the Atlantic Ocean and Table Mountain. These wonders will stay with me for a lifetime.

During my time at UWC, I was unfortunately unable to give back to the university. I was fortunate,

however, to meet with eleven individuals within the university throughout my stay, as well as to meet with other professionals within my research area. Within the university, I met with the following departments: the Community Law Centre; the Institute for Poverty, Land, and Agrarian Studies; the Institute for Social Development; African Centre for Citizenship and Democracy (ACCEDE); Economics and Management Science; Political Science; and the School of Government. These departments were eager to learn of my research. They provided me with a number of helpful materials, discussed the wealth of data that I had procured and suggested future steps, and introduced new ideas. I arrived in Cape Town after having been in South Africa for five months, and was therefore quite keen to discuss my hypotheses, findings, and obstacles with accomplished scholars.

These meetings generated a number of important insights. The School of Government, which also researches protests, provided important critiques and suggestions on my theoretical foundations. I am not sure that these context-specific suggestions would have been obtained at Missouri. ACCEDE provided vital tips on survey design and implementation, alongside important information on the debates in political science research within South Africa. The Institute for Social Development was able to deepen my understanding of South African municipal planning and fostered a number of new project ideas. After completing my dissertation, I am interested in revisiting these conversations and potentially seeking collaboration with this department. Finally, the Community Law Centre vitally assisted my data-collection efforts. With this meeting, I not only was able to uncover robust, comprehensive information on local protests throughout South Africa, but I was also introduced to a series of contacts who have provided me with invaluable information about the mining industry.

Ultimately, while my tenure at UWC was short, it was incredibly productive. Through these meetings, I received valuable insights as to how to structure and interpret my research. I tremendously increased the amount of data that I have to complete my project. I am fortunate for and grateful to the individuals who took time out of their schedules to meet with a graduate student.

I have been fortunate to have traveled widely, but South Africa will forever remain in my bones. The information I gleaned, the contacts that I made, the heart-wrenching inequality and the political fervor is unparalleled to any other experience. South Africa is a country of amazing contrast, from the elites in Sandton to the shacks of Marikana. These contrasts are in many ways similar to those in the United States, albeit on a much greater scale. A partnership with UWC facilitates this understanding and vitally contributes to the work that we do at Missouri.