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I wasn't given many opportunities to travel until I was in my third year at my undergraduate institution when I got to study abroad in Madrid, Spain. Exploring Spain, and other countries, not only gave me access to learn various cultures but I also realized how much I enjoyed travelling. I was experiencing new surroundings as well as learning the history of the places I was visiting along with the history of the people. Once the COVID-19 pandemic shut down most of the world, any aspirations to travel vanished. It wasn't until my first year in graduate school that I was presented with a travel opportunity. My advisor, Dr. Landor, informed the lab that after a much-awaited chance to travel, the lab was able to visit Cape Town, South Africa and conduct research at a local university, the University of Western Cape. At the university, we would be conducting similar interviews that we were doing at the University of Missouri: asking participants about colorist messages and how those messages have influenced how they see themselves and others. Upon hearing this news, the lab began to prepare what was required of us as research assistants and visiting scholars to the University of Western Cape.

While hearing that we were going to travel to South Africa was exciting news, my first thought was relating to financial concerns. Soon enough, we were all informed of the Henry Mitchell Scholarship and that helped ease my concerns. After learning of the application requirements and submitting my application, I was hopeful that this scholarship could go a long way in our travels. Once I learned that I was accepted for the scholarship, along with my other lab peers, I was able to focus more on the research aspect of the trip and not to longer worry about the finances of the trip. I was excited for this trip because I was going to experience a new country, but I was going to be a part of Dr. Landor's international colorism research project. I

knew that going into graduate school that I would be learning immensely from Dr. Landor, in regard to racial socialization and colorism, but it never occurred to me that this learning experience would be taken on an international level.

After travelling for almost two days from Columbia to Cape Town, we made our way to where we would be staying for while we were in South Africa. On the way to the house, I began to take in the sights of Cape Town: the clouds passing Table Mountain, the clear blue water of the Atlantic Ocean and the busy streets that seemed to be everywhere in the capital. The next day we made our way to Saldanha, which is located on the western part of the country. It was in Saldanha that we met some local university professors, their students, as well as local community workers. We had the chance to sit in on presentations about the work the graduate students were doing as well as what programs were being offered to students in Saldanha. It was great to see how one's work can be applied to a world outside of academia and see how can be impactful to the community. By watching these presentations and hear how community organizers work with the university and the community, it gave me an inside look into how research can go further and be implemented in a way that can be beneficial to community members.



When it was time to begin the interviews on the university's campus, we soon found out that we needed to recruit more participants for the study. With some help of two of Dr. Roman's students, most of Dr. Landor's research team began to recruit students on campus. This came with some difficulty as there was a language barrier, along with some differences in how participants are to be recruited. After speaking with students and passing out flyers, we were able to have 74 participants, all spread out in focus groups of 3 to 12 people. What students shared

were very important when talking about the history of colorism and discrimination in South Africa as it gave us an inside look into how colorism presents itself every day in South Africa. I had some qualitative experience before entering graduate school, however, in visiting the University of Western Cape, I had to develop new skills such as taking field notes and prepare for any follow up questions based on students' responses. Learning to adapt was also important for this trip as we faced situations where we had to be able to think on our feet and come up with a plan fast. Additionally, this gave me another look inside research: not everything is going to go according to plan, so you must be ready with alternatives to ensure that your project will not be greatly affected.

When we weren't on campus, we were exploring the food and sights of Cape Town. During our first week, we went to a local African restaurant, Fatima's, which seemed to be a hidden gem among the more tourist areas of the city. I have never had African food but being Dominican, I found there to be similarities what was commonly found in African dishes. At the restaurant, I had *braai* (barbeque meat), *jollof* (rice) and a vegetable mix, all of which reminded me of the dishes my mother had made back home. A few days later, we went to another restaurant called Gold, which allowed us to try food from all over the continent of Africa. Again, some of the dishes also reminded me of some of my favorite Dominican dishes, which affirmed my both my racial and ethnic identities. Before arriving to Africa, I didn't have a strong of a need to visit as some of my peers and Dr. Landor; in the days before arriving, Dr. Landor spoke of her excitement in wanting to "return home." I understood why she and others were excited, however, it wasn't until I saw the dancers and ate the food at Gold that I realized what I had been missing out in not diving deeper into my racial identity.



I would like to conclude this reflection in thanking the Henry Mitchell Scholarship committee for providing the funds for this once in a lifetime opportunity. In joining Dr. Landor on this trip, it has broadened my understanding of what is possible for me as a researcher and there are no bounds to where your research can take you. Thank you for your generosity and support and allowing me to see there are no bounds to where I can take my research.