

Research Process

Working under Dr. Whitford for the past two years has been a very enriching research experience. Although he is in SPIA and I am in Terry, we have been able to combine our interests for a mutually enjoyable experience. Currently, our two main goals in research are the final revisions on our “Political and Social Foundations for Environmental Sustainability” paper and to continue with our transfer pricing research.

In our initial meeting, Dr. Whitford immediately sparked my interest in researching under him. He was looking for someone to work with him on his environmental sustainability project. I’m a strong environmentalist and this project seemed like the perfect way to merge my environmental and business interests. Also, Dr. Whitford offered a possible co-authorship on the paper. I was willing to work very hard for a chance to co-author a paper with Dr. Whitford. I also knew Dr. Whitford was quite well respected in his field and already had a number of publications. Most importantly, I enjoyed his company and thought he would be a good faculty mentor.

In the beginning, Dr. Whitford spent time acclimating me to the research process. He taught me the basic research paper formula and had me study other research papers to identify the different parts in the research paper equation. After becoming familiar with the research paper formula, Dr. Whitford familiarized me more with the concept of environmental sustainability and our paper. Environmental sustainability is the long-term preservation of our environment for the future. Geared towards a business sense, it assesses if a business or project can occur without permanent damage/change to the natural environment. The purpose of our essay was to quantitatively investigate several possible foundations for environmental sustainability, as measured across countries with

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varying geography, development patterns, social customs, and political arrangements. We first tested two central hypotheses about the roles of democracy and federalism. Our study asked if democracy increases environmental sustainability and if federalism reduces sustainability. We also assessed the roles of organized groups representing different kinds of environmental interests, development paths, and religious orientations

Once I had a good grasp of our paper, we started our sustainability research. For my part, most of my research consisted of lit reviews. Dr. Whitford would send me different articles and I would review and write up summaries for him. After a couple of lit reviews, I became quite good at succinctly writing up short digests without losing important information. As I became more familiar with lit reviews, Dr. Whitford started giving me more freedom with articles. I used Google scholar a lot to find relevant articles for our paper. Also, we did a lot of reverse citation searches by looking through the citations of papers and articles we had already used. Sometimes, Dr. Whitford would send me pages of citations and ask me to write lit reviews for any applicable papers. For working papers, I would email the authors and ask for their papers and permission to cite their papers. Along with academic texts, we reviewed numerous World Bank data and other political and global business databases.

Most of our data came from Yale's Environmental Sustainability Index. The ESI (Environmental Sustainability Index) acts as a measure of environmental standards in place throughout different countries. By quantifying a country's progress in environmental sustainability, ESI acts as a short-term national environmental policy guide. It uses 21 indicators that fall into five categories: Environmental Systems, Reducing Environmental Stresses, Reducing Human Vulnerability to Environmental

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Stresses, Societal and Institutional Capacity to Respond to Environmental Challenges, and Global Stewardship for measurement.

After filling in most of the introduction and foundation/theory section, Dr. Whitford took over the paper. He conducted the statistical work and produced the model specification and estimation, data tables, and results section of the paper. Although Dr. Whitford did all of the statistical work, he updated me on the procedure so that I always knew what was going on. He then edited and coalesced the different sections of the paper into our first draft. Afterwards, he sent me the paper for editing and asked me to format all of the citations. With a few more edits, we finished our paper and sent it out to different publications. We're currently working on our final revision at Political Research Quarterly.

The entire research process was a huge learning experience for me. I learned how to write a research paper and conduct research. I also gained a wonderful faculty mentor in Dr. Whitford who walked me through the entire research process. Regardless of which field I enter after graduation, the research skills I gained through this project will be an invaluable asset.