

QSS Honors Program Experience
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Why Should I Write a Thesis?

1. As a senior at Dartmouth, you have time, financial backing, and the mentorship of leading scholars in your field to put towards a topic that *you* think is timely, needs addressing, and/or cool! That's an incredible privilege and the primary reason why I knew I wanted to write a thesis.
2. I had a question that I thought (and still think) is fascinating and I was excited by the chance to devote a ton of resources to exploring it.
3. I had completed the one-quarter independent study (QSS 81) in the spring of my junior year and enjoyed being able to direct my own project. I knew writing a thesis would take longer and be much harder but I thought learning to independently manage a relatively long-term, large-scale project would be good preparation for professional life.

Advice for Future Thesis Students

- If you're going to be conducting a survey experiment, keep in mind that you're going to have to also cover the survey platform's service fees and, if the platform you use is not American (e.g., Prolific), foreign transaction fees. In other words, if you're going to need \$x to pay n respondents, you're going to need more than \$x to fund your survey.
- Write a general grant application early. Make a list of all the grants you might qualify for. Ask your advisors what grants past students have gotten. Once you have your final list, adapt your general grant proposal to each one's specific word counts and requirements.
- Imperfect but early > perfect but late. It's not going to be perfect anyway! It can be more helpful to show your advisor your progress even if (maybe especially if) you're not yet happy with it. They know a lot more than you and their guidance will lead you to end products that are more polished and probably also completed much faster than if you'd sat on it for more time.
- Keep on iterating. My advisor used this word (iterate) a lot and the effectiveness of this strategy is one of my personal takeaways from this year. One of your goals in thesis writing will be making your points as precisely as possible. What was helpful advice for me is producing multiple versions of the same section, even if those versions only differ by a few phrases or words.
- Use a citation manager to keep track of your sources and notes. I use(d) Mendeley and it worked well for me. It'll help you organize your sources and, if you use Overleaf to write your thesis, will produce a .bib file that you can use to easily create your bibliography.
- Go to your friends' defenses. One part of senior spring that I hadn't fully expected is how many people in my class would be presenting about their theses all in the same window of time. Supporting your friends while they talk about a topic that excites them is awesome and unfortunately won't be as feasible once you graduate.
- Reach out to faculty or previous students in junior year. These conversations are helpful in getting an idea of what the year will look like, finding the best advisor for your project,

determining whether your current idea is feasible, and figuring out a way to adapt your question if it's not. If it'd be helpful, I'd be happy to talk about the thesis or QSS more generally -- just send me a note using my email at the top of this document.

What I Did

My thesis was based on a survey experiment that I designed in Qualtrics and fielded on Prolific. Here's the abstract: A consensus in political communication, drawn from social identity theory, is that when politicians make targeted appeals, they often fail to win support from the targeted group and are punished by non-members of the targeted group. But recently, indicating support for minorities has become increasingly popular among white Democrats. Do white Democrats now approve of politicians who appeal to minority out-groups? Using a survey of 1,354 Blacks and 1,361 white Democrats, I examine how non-targeted white Democrats versus targeted Blacks respond to a white politician's appeal to Black voters. Contrary to previous work's interpretation of social identity theory, I find that white Democrats now react more positively to appeals towards minorities than the targeted minority audience themselves. Tellingly, I observe white Democrats' enthusiastic approval of appeals to minorities alongside their increased belief that the politician cares about people like them. These results suggest that white Democrats no longer view minorities as an out-group but instead as members of an in-group defined by shared partisanship.