My experience with a one quarter research project in
the Program in Quantitative Social Science at Dartmouth College

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The one quarter research project that I completed as a culminating part of my undergraduate education stemmed from the myriad experiences and relationships I developed throughout my four years studying Quantitative Social Science (QSS). I cannot disentangle any part of my project from the knowledge and support I received from peers, staff, and faculty alike. The idea for my project originated with a research paper that I wrote with my classmate Maddie Sach in Professor Kathleen Powers' seminar, *Public Opinion and American Foreign Policy*. That paper – currently under review for publication! – relied on experimental data to explore the social underpinnings of foreign policy public opinion. With generous support from Dartmouth's office of Undergraduate Advising and Research, Maddie and I were able to field a national survey and provide a novel contribution to political science. Our paper shows that multiple types of peer groups influence policy preferences with differential impact based on political knowledge.

Building upon our experience, Maddie and I both approached Professor Powers about writing QSS theses, thinking that we would extend our research in different directions. Though I ultimately condensed my idea into a one quarter project, I continued to enjoy both Maddie and Professor Powers' support during each step of the research process. With their input, I decided to investigate the effect of issue framing on the relative importance of elite and social cues in foreign policy preference formation.

My work with Maddie and Professor Powers exemplifies the collaborative spirit that permeates the entire QSS program, in which a rigorous curriculum that emphasizes research forces students to constantly work with peers and mentors. Nowhere was this truer than in Professor Brendan Nyhan's course, *Experiments in Politics*. The goal of this lab-style seminar is to publish a scholarly article in a peer-reviewed journal based on work carried over the course of a 10-week term, an undertaking that requires relentless teamwork. Beyond fruitful connections, Professor Nyhan's class provided me crucial skills for conducting empirical research including survey design, data collection, statistical evaluation, and best practices in academic research. I am greatly indebted to this class for equipping me with the tools necessary for designing and implementing the randomized crossover survey experiment in my quarter research project.

For the statistical modeling portion of my one quarter research project, I relied heavily on skills I cultivated from QSS courses, including *Quantitative Political Analysis, Econometrics,* and *Data Visualization*. *Quantitative Political Analysis* was particularly formative, as it provided my initial impetus to major in QSS. Through problem sets based on real-world questions and data, *Quantitative Political Analysis* taught me the satisfaction and joy of finding objective solutions to urgent questions using statistical models. I was a teaching assistant for the class in 18F and

19S, further augmenting my competence and passion. As I wrote the R code for the data analysis component of my one quarter research project, I consistently utilized the problem-solving techniques I learned from not only studying but teaching statistics.

Next year, as I pursue a Master of Public Policy at Georgetown University, I may not use many of the technical skills I developed as a QSS major. My R skills may deteriorate, and I will probably forget most of my linear algebra. However, I know I will never forget how to question the world around me, how to critically examine data, and how to interpret problems with an understanding of uncertainty. As Michael Lewis wrote in *The Undoing Project*, a book that I read in another QSS class, *Sports Analytics*, "Someone once said that education was knowing what to do when you don't know" (p. 140). If nothing else, my education in QSS has taught me that when I don't know something, I will turn to data, statistics, and science.