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GIFT: Graduate Instruction with Purpose: Theory Building and Community Engagement in Quantitative Methods Courses

Virginia Harrison, Clemson University

ABSTRACT

This class-tested GIFT demonstrates the value of service-learning in an academic master's degree quantitative methods course. Students in small groups developed a theory-driven research project to help a local nonprofit understand donation motivations among the undergraduate student body. The assignment required them to build public relations and communications theory while developing meaningful takeaways for the partner nonprofit. Students reported feeling less intimidated by quantitative methods, learning principles of scholarly research, and feeling good about helping their community. The nonprofit partner also said they valued the data collected by the students for their fundraising planning. The GIFT illustrates how a quantitative research assignment with a real-world application may serve a classroom of communication students who express different goals—either pursuing a Ph.D. or entering the profession—while benefiting town-gown relations.

Keywords: service-learning, graduate education, quantitative research methods, nonprofit, public relations

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Assignment Overview

Rationale

In an industry-based field of study, public relations graduate students pursue advanced degrees to prepare for career paths in various communication-related industries or academic fields (Aldoory & Toth, 2000; CPRE, 2012). Therefore, students in master's level graduate classes may have different goals, with some seeking to pursue a doctoral degree while others enter the practice. Graduate-level education typically splits each type of student into different research tracks, whether that's through offering different degree programs (practitioner-focused degree vs. a research-focused degree) or different class requirements based on tracks (e.g., CPRE, 2012). This class-tested GIFT demonstrates that research methods instruction can serve a communication classroom with students pursuing both practical and academic career paths.

The current GIFT was utilized in a master's degree program that would be considered an "academic graduate degree" (CPRE, 2012), meaning it focused on teaching and research preparation in a university setting but included students pursuing both professional and academic careers post-graduation. The semester-long assignment asked students to develop and execute a theory-driven research study that also helped a small nonprofit learn more about donation behavior in the local community and how theory could inform future decisions. The assignment had a dual purpose: providing rigorous research training that will prepare students for a university career while also instructing students to apply these methods to industry-based problems.

To accomplish this dual purpose, the class applied a service-learning instruction model (e.g., Fraustino et al., 2019), which educates students in public relations principles while using a real-world partner's needs as the basis for a communication campaign. The benefits of service-learning in undergraduate public relations campaigns classes

(Aldoory & Wrigley, 1999; Fraustino et al., 2019; McCullough, 2019) and nonprofit management classes (Addams et al., 2010; Cuyler, 2017) has been well documented for both student learning and operational benefits to community organizations. Yet, research in public relations has not explored the merits of service-learning at the graduate level. This GIFT suggests that service-learning can be applied at an advanced level of education with similar student and community-partner benefits.

While this description may sound similar to methods used to teach undergraduate research principles, this GIFT was appropriate for a graduate-level class for its emphasis on building theoretical knowledge in the communications discipline. This class was taught in a master's program that did not have a history of community-engaged learning; instead, the program focused only on traditional research methods building theoretical knowledge. This GIFT was recognized across the department for demonstrating that both student instruction and community partnerships can benefit from a model of theory-driven service-learning in a graduate curriculum.

As a pedagogical tool, using a real-world partner to illustrate principles of research design may help address intimidation that first-year graduate students face in taking quantitative methods courses (e.g., Ramos & Carvalho, 2011). Students who are pursuing a degree with intentions of entering the profession may not understand the value of academic research training (e.g., Bowen, 2003). Modeling a research project from a real organization's concerns may help to make principles of quantitative methods more accessible to all students in the classroom.

Additionally, service-learning may enhance town-gown relations (McCullough, 2019), particularly at the graduate level. Service-learning may help graduate students learn about their community, especially when many of them are moving to a location for the first time (see student feedback in Evidence of Learning Outcomes). As in the case of this class-tested GIFT, the assignment can also help the broader community engage with the university's research arm and learn the importance of rigorous research-backed decision-making, which is especially important for organizations like small nonprofits that often do not have the capacity to undertake data collection themselves.

Learning Objectives

The main learning objective of this assignment is to design and execute a scholarly research project in small groups. Students learn to gather academic literature by focusing on using a communication theory to support their research design. Then, they design a hypothesis, write a survey, analyze statistical data, and interpret findings and limitations. Students are trained in ethical principles of conducting research by receiving their Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI Program) certification. The goal of the research project is for the paper to be ready to submit to a national-level academic conference such as the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (AEJMC) or the National Communication Association (NCA) upon completion of the class. Therefore, theoretical rigor was required to prepare students for submission to an academic conference, yet the theory was grounded in a real-world problem facing the partner nonprofit.

Importantly, students implemented the class partner's research needs and goals within the study design. After meeting with the nonprofit's executive director (ED) early in the semester, students looked for scholarly literature and wrote hypotheses that addressed a question or need posed by the ED. For example, in our class, the ED wanted to learn how to better engage undergraduate students at the university as volunteers or donors with the nonprofit's food pantry. Students in the class then found theories related to empathy, transparency, social norms, and social identity theory to support their study design. As a class, we mapped out at least one hypothesis for each study and chose measurement scales from the academic literature to represent these variables. Hypotheses had to test at least one premise of their chosen theory, which helped to demonstrate the process of academic theory-building. Students were taught to assess reliability, validity, and variance of the scales they chose.

At the end of the semester, the students were tasked with interpreting their findings for both an academic audience (the instructor) and practical audience (the nonprofit executive director) (see Assignment Requirements). Importantly, they had to contribute to or assess the main theory they chose while also explaining to the nonprofit how this theory impacted their respondents' motivations to donate or volunteer with the nonprofit. For example, we discussed how communication theory could be updated to better understand Gen Z donation preferences.

To summarize, the learning outcomes included:

1. Understand how theoretical knowledge is developed and the limitations of such knowledge.
2. Practice principles of quantitative methods and hypothesis building.
3. Articulate how theory can address real-world problems in nonprofit public relations.

Connection to Public Relations Theory and Practice

This GIFT helps address several of the "knowledge, skills, abilities, and traits (KSATs)…desired of emerging public relations practitioners" (Wallace & Weed, 2024, p. 7). According to the list in Wallace and Weed (2024), this GIFT helps students develop knowledge of public relations (and broader communication) theory through an extensive literature review, ethics through their CITI training certification, and business acumen and management by engaging with a real-world problem to ground their theoretical insights. They developed skills in communication, public speaking, and writing, and abilities related to problem solving, critical thinking, and analytical thinking while developing the study and interpreting results for both theoretical and practical outcomes. Lastly, because students worked in small teams of three to four people, they developed traits related to collaboration, hard work, and creativity in developing hypotheses incorporating theory and practical goals.

Additionally, this class helped to further advance the theory of donor relations in public relations (Kelly, 1994). Kelly (1994) was the first to explain how fundraising is a specialization of public relations focused on donor publics, and no degree-granting academic program has yet been established to specifically train future nonprofit fundraisers (Mack et al., 2016; Shaker & Nathan, 2017). Public relations may be the most appropriate discipline in which to teach fundraising communication because of its emphasis on relationship building and strategic planning (Mack et al., 2016; Wallace & Weed, 2024). Incorporating service-learning principles from public relations campaign courses into graduate-level research methods courses can provide graduate students with motivation to consider nonprofit careers (Harrison, 2022) while learning how to apply rigorous research design principles to real-world nonprofit challenges.

How the Assignment was Class-Tested

This assignment was implemented in fall 2024 in a quantitative methods class with 15 master's students, the majority of whom (14) were in their first year of graduate education. The class did not have any Ph.D. students and was designed to be an introductory graduate-level research methods course focusing on study design principles and an introduction to academic scholarship. Students were required to complete the full research project, including data collection, analysis, and interpretation, and present their completed study to the instructor and nonprofit partner.

Evidence of Learning Outcomes

This GIFT was peer-nominated for a university-wide graduate school award for community engagement. In the nomination packet, both students in the course and the nonprofit ED described the benefits of this service-learning research project for educational instruction and awareness of community needs. One student wrote that the course offered “a unique and impactful opportunity for experiential learning” that allowed them to see the “tangible impact of their work.” According to one nomination letter:

> This partnership allowed us, as students, to not only apply theoretical knowledge to a practical setting, but also to directly contribute to a meaningful cause. The work we did with [Nonprofit X] became the main focus of our course, and it provided us with an unparalleled opportunity to engage in research that directly benefited the [university] community.

Another nominating student said:

> This project was both rewarding and educational. I learned how to create and carry out a quantitative research study, however I also discovered my own unawareness of serious issues in my community. Collaborating with a local nonprofit organization not only brought awareness to these issues, but provided an opportunity for us students to play a positive role in helping these issues in our community.

Post-course anonymous evaluations indicated that 13 of 14 students who responded “strongly agreed” that “the course challenged me to think critically and communicate clearly about the subject.” Additionally, 12 of 14 students “strongly agreed” that “the course assignments were related to the course learning outcomes.” Many indicated that the applied project helped illustrate concepts and overcome feelings of intimidation in taking a quantitative methods course. Students wrote in the free response section of the anonymous evaluation:

> I was very scared to take this course but I am SO glad I did. … The applied element of this course, with us doing real research for

> a real client, really helped me learn the material. I also liked how class was split between instructional material and research project time.… I have NEVER in my life understood how to do math and here I am feeling pretty confident about stats.

Anotther student evaluator wrote:

> Over the semester, I have gained a base-level understanding of quantitative methods in communication research and feel more comfortable coming up with research methods. [The instructor] made this class extremely engaging, especially because she centered our work around a real-life organization, which made our work meaningful and not just something to turn in.

The nomination letter from the nonprofit partner explained the value of the partnership in helping its own operations. "With each project, [our nonprofit] has come away with information that has proven to be valuable to us." Additionally, the ED valued the class partnership as an opportunity to educate the transient student community about the needs of local permanent residents, which often go unnoticed in a college town. "I have been impressed by… [the instructor's] desire to ensure her students are aware of the community that they are a part of during their college experience."

Assignment Guide

Brief Description

The GIFT assignment is a semester-long, full-length research paper comprised of in-class workshops and homework. The weekly 3-hour class is divided into two halves: first is instruction based on textbook readings, and the second half consists of the workshops focused on developing the research project in incremental steps. The lectures provide instruction on research concepts (e.g., variables, validity, regression analysis) that are then practiced during the workshop, which often includes small participation-graded activities (see Appendix for examples and Teacher's

Note for schedule). Workshops also include instruction on how to write an academic manuscript. Three drafts of the research manuscript are due throughout the semester: (1) literature review, (2) methods, and (3) results with preliminary discussion. Students are required to make edits suggested by the instructor on the new version of the manuscript so that each draft improves on the previous one. Importantly, the written paper is required to be academic-conference ready, holding students to higher standards for theoretical development and a literature review more aligned with a master's thesis than an undergraduate methods course.

Data collection is managed by the instructor. With instructor guidance, students write surveys and populate them into the Qualtrics online platform provided by the university. The department's SONA research recruitment system is utilized for data collection. All undergraduates enrolled in introductory public speaking courses at the university are enrolled into the SONA subject pool. The instructor manages the surveys on SONA for the participants, but students in the class use the Qualtrics system for downloading results. Students earn their CITI certification early in the semester, and IRB approval for data collection is obtained by the instructor.

Students give a final presentation to their classmates, the instructor, and nonprofit ED to help develop oral speaking skills and check that they can explain their research. Presentations are structured like an academic conference presentation (12-15 minutes) but with special emphasis on practical implications. Among other criteria, students are graded on how well they convey theoretical research concepts in layman's terms for the class partner (see Grading Criteria/Rubrics).

Learning Outcomes

First and foremost, students learn how to design and execute an academic research study and build confidence in their ability to design and interpret a quantitative study. Students create one hypothesis and choose appropriate theory-backed variables from literature to test this hypothesis. They write the survey questionnaire on their own with input from the instructor, who provides questions on demographic and control variables (e.g., familiarity with the partner nonprofit, donation behavior). Students determine their own independent variables, dependent variables, and moderators with instructor guidance. The paper is structured as an academic research paper with the standard literature review, methods, results, and discussion sections.

Upon completion of the assignment, students should understand the importance of bridging the gap between academia and practice. Students will learn how to interpret research results in two ways: (1) for academic rigor by justifying the choice of variables and statistical analyses and (2) for practical benefit by developing research-backed outcomes to help the nonprofit partner. Students should be able to see how theoretically grounded research can inform real-world solutions or address data deficiencies, which is the reality for many nonprofits who do not have staff or resources to undertake research and planning (Fraustino et al., 2019; Rogers & Andrews, 2016). This perspective should not only help the students in their careers but also help them understand the realities of public relations at all kinds of organizations, broadening their knowledge of the field (e.g., Harrison, 2022).

The final paper should be complete and thoughtful enough for submission to a national academic conference competition or journal. For example, after taking the class, one student group actively prepared to submit their paper to an academic journal. Students will also be able to discuss this research project in job interviews as an example of real-world experience and add it to a portfolio.

Learning outcomes also exist for the class partner. The final presentations should be clear enough for the class partner to feel that at least one of their initial questions or problems presented at the start of the semester was addressed. Additionally, the goals of the assignment may help inform the class partner about the value of bridging the gap between academia and practice through theory-driven research and collaboration. While nonprofits may shy away from academic collaborations because of the differing expectations for a scholarly project (Rogers & Andrews, 2016), this class should demonstrate the benefits. Particularly for a field like public relations, having practice-informed theory can benefit both the scholarly community as well as the practice itself (Aldoory & Wrigley, 1999). For example, after partnering with this class, the nonprofit partner received data and analysis about the university's undergraduate student population and their likelihood to support the nonprofit. This data was valuable for the nonprofit partner, as the ED had identified current undergraduate students as an area of growth and challenge.

Assignment Requirements

Instructions for the final research project and class presentation are listed below. However, this paper followed a scaffolded approach with three previous drafts due throughout the semester and additional graded activities (see Appendix for these assignments and activity rubric). These final instructions are a culmination of workshops on how to write a scholarly paper and principles of research design as described above.

See the Teacher's Note for an outline of the semester-long schedule that informs these instructions.

Final Group Research Paper Instructions Template

Here it is! Now is the time to put all of the pieces together to produce an academic research paper. Follow the steps we've talked about in each class workshop. Make sure your paper is formatted in APA style and includes the following:

1. Title and your names
2. Introduction: See Week 14 lecture.
3. Literature review**:** See Week 4 lecture and my feedback on three previous drafts.
    - A. Theory and variables properly cited
    - B. Hypothesis properly written
4. Methods: See Week 13 lecture and my feedback on two previous drafts.
    - A. Procedure, Sample, and Measures sections
5. Results: See Week 13 lecture and my feedback on one previous draft.
    - A. Analysis and outliers
    - B. Statistical results
6. Discussion**:** See Week 14 lecture and my feedback on one previous draft.
    - A. Theoretical and practical implications sections
    - B. Limitations section
    - C. Future directions section
7. References list in APA style: Fix any errors marked on previous versions. Check citation generators for accuracy.
8. Appendices (as necessary): Any tables/figures as needed in

APA style. (Do not copy and paste SPSS tables; they are not in APA style.)

Tips:

- I am mostly concerned with you including the necessary content in each section and addressing any feedback from previous drafts/meetings. For example, report the appropriate results. Make sure you have demographics and stats (scale *M*, *SD*, alpha) for your measures in your Methods section. Make sure your hypothesis is written correctly.
- Make sure your paper is consistent from start to finish. For example, your literature should explain your variables, methods and results should include those same variables, and conclusions should make sense for those variables you tested.
- Do not say anything that gives away our participants' identities, including the name of our university or local geography.
- Check and correct any typos. Follow APA style accurately. Make the final version professional.
- Don't miss the deadline.
- Grades subject to peer reviews.

Final Group Research Presentation Template

Submit your group's presentation visuals (PowerPoint or PDF) here. Be prepared to present your project to [nonprofit ED name] during class. One submission per group.

Presentations must be no longer than 12-15 minutes. I will cut you off if you go over your time to ensure everyone has a chance to present equally. I will randomly choose the order with a random number generator. Please dress professionally (like you're going to work; no t-shirts or sweats). Expect Q&A to last an additional 5-10 minutes, and *everyone in the group should participate in answering questions*.

Consider that you are presenting your research to an academic (me) and also to a professional partner. This assignment will follow the format of a conference presentation with a special emphasis on practical implications.

1. Introduction/Research (3-4 slides): Explain the rationale for your project. Answer the "so what?" question. Provide background on your theory and the variables you chose. State your hypothesis.
2. Methods (2-3 slides): Explain how you collected your data. Who took your survey (demographics)? How did you measure your variables?
3. Results (2-3 slides): Explain how you analyzed your data and what you found. Are your findings statistically significant, and can you accept/reject your hypothesis? Why or why not?
    - Report your findings on the [nonprofit name] familiarity question.
4. Discussion (3-4 slides): Explain theoretical implications, practical implications, limitations, and future research. Provide at least one full slide of practical implications specifically tailored to [ED name and nonprofit name]! What can [ED name] learn from your results? Do you have practical recommendations for them?
    - Be careful not to *overstate your findings,* i.e., say that all college students will respond positively to an appeal using empathy.

Grading Criteria/Rubric

Below are rubrics for (1) the final manuscript and (2) the final in-class presentation. Interpreting results with a focus on the nonprofit partner's needs was a critical part of the discussion section in each paper. Students' ability to take findings and convey them in layman's terms was an important part of feedback for the presentations

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Table 1

Research Paper Rubric

Criteria	Points
Content Do you have all of the required sections listed in the instructions? Do you meet the academic standards for the required sections as we discussed in your textbook, example article, and lecture? Have you interpreted and applied citations from outside sources properly to your work? Have you accurately reported necessary statistics and interpreted them appropriately? Did you incorporate instructor feedback from drafts and meetings?	100 pts
Writing Is your grammar, punctuation, and spelling error-free? Is your writing reflective of a graduate-level student? Proofread everything!	25 pts
APA style Follow all rules for citations, formatting, and titles per APA Style 7th edition. I will be strict with this to follow standards from academic journals. Check everything from a citation generator; they are often wrong!	25 pts
	Total: 150 pts

Table 2

Final Class Presentation Rubric

Criteria	Points
Error-free visual aid (group grade) Ensure your visual aid is engaging and visually appealing. It should be easy to follow. No typos, grammatical, or spelling errors. Follow correct APA style to cite sources.	15 pts
Explanation of Research (group grade) You included all of the key information required in the presentation. You have one full slide of practical implications tailored to the class partner. The explanation of your research is easy-to-understand and accurate. You justify and explain the choices you made to execute your study.	20 pts
Speaking skills (individual grade) Everyone must speak! Speak confidently and clearly. No excessive use of filler words (like, um, you know). You dressed professionally for the presentation.	10 pts
Q&A (individual grade) Everyone should speak during the Q&A portion of your presentation. Did you answer the question succinctly, strategically, and informatively?	5 pts
	Total: 50 pts

Teaching Note

The instructor managed the relationship with the nonprofit partner and provided some limitations to the project to help manage students' workloads for the semester. For example, students were required to write only one hypothesis and create one survey for the SONA subject pool audience (undergraduate students at the university). This requirement ensured that each group was able to find enough participants within the 17-week semester and provided undergraduate classes with opportunities to earn their research participation credit through SONA. Additionally, the instructor purposely engaged a class partner that was located near the university, and thus, the data were relevant to their operations. In other words, this GIFT was successful because the instructor made sure the data collection requirements were realistic for the students while being methodologically rigorous yet relevant to the class partner.

The class focused on designing a survey questionnaire because of the ease of access to SONA participants. Instead of having students stress over finding their own participants, using a survey method would ensure the instructor could manage data access without burdening students. This class template could also be used to teach experimental or content analysis methods.

Below is a sample schedule for the research project workshops (held in the second half of the 3-hour class). The schedule lists the activities and drafts due leading up to the final full research paper and presentation which are described under "Assignment Requirements."

Table 3

Sample Class Schedule to Support Research Paper and Presentation Assignment

	Suggested Workshop Topics	**Example Workshop Activities**
Week 1	Introduce research project	Choose groups for project
Week 2	Introduce class partner	Guest lecture from partner
Week 3	Literature Reviews and writing a hypothesis	Consider “so what?” question, determine key theory and concepts for project
Week 4	Find appropriate measures for your hypothesis	Literature Review outline due start of class
Week 5	Variables and hypothesis mapping activity	Final hypothesis due by end of class workshop
Week 6	Instructor feedback on Literature Review outline and written hypothesis	Due: Complete CITI training certificate
Week 7	Write your survey instrument	Revised hypothesis due by end of class
Week 8	Target launch of surveys on SONA	Input final survey instrument on Qualtrics by end of class
Week 9	University holiday	

Week 10	Continue writing Literature Review and write Methods section	Check data collection progress
Week 11	Begin cleaning and analyzing your data	Draft full Literature Review and Methods sections due
Week 12	Check descriptive statistics of data Instructor feedback on Literature Review and Methods sections	
Week 13	Determine tests needed to address hypothesis with your data (inferential statistics) Write Results section	Cleaned, final data from Qualtrics due start of class
Week 14	Finalize data analysis Write Discussion section	Revised Lit Review and Methods sections due with corresponding cleaned data
Week 15	Feedback meetings with instructor Continue finalizing paper and prepare for presentation	Draft of Results section and Discussion outline due
Week 16	Final group research paper presentations for class partner Instructor feedback on Results and Discussion sections	Presentations due in class
Finals Week	Final Research Papers due	Group research papers due (full conference-ready paper)

Appendix
Instructions for Scaffolded Paper Assignments and Graded Workshop Activities

The “So What?” Question (ungraded)

By the end of class today, your group should:

1. Review your notes from last week when you started brainstorming variables and research questions. These ideas should be related to our **overall goal** of *how <<nonprofit>> should use communication to encourage donation and/or volunteer support from current <<university>> students.*
2. Revisit concepts from last week. Begin to show the relationship between your variables.
    - What is the ***independent*** and ***dependent variable***? What are potential ***third variables*** that might affect this relationship?
    - Brainstorm at least one ***research question*** (exploration) or ***hypothesis*** (prediction) for these concepts.
    - Remember the research goal of ***explanation***!
3. **Answer the “so what?” question** for your team’s project. Why should anyone care about your variables or question/hypothesis? What is the bigger picture? Consider:
    - Why should other people pay attention to your research?
    - How will this impact the “big picture” for nonprofit communications?
    - What knowledge are you building? Why does this matter?
    - How will your study help communications practitioners (e.g., public relations practitioners, nonprofit executives)?

4. **Take notes during <<client’s>> presentation** to help inform these choices. Something she says may affect your original brainstorm; be adaptive! Keep your notes for next week’s class.

Literature Review Outline

1. What **theory of communication** might help you understand how these variables fit together?
    - Begin searching for relevant literature that can place your study in context. Refer to our discussion on how to write literature reviews.
    - Your **ideas may change** as you conduct your literature review. That’s OK!
2. Begin **explicating your variables**. Define what they mean and how they should be measured.
    - Again, refer to previous research to help inform these decisions!
3. Outline of your literature review is **due next class.**
    - I want to see the theory and variables you are considering for your project.
    - List a few citations in APA style for your literature review (steps 2 and 3).

Turn in your group’s outline by the start of next class. One submission per group; please include everyone’s names. You will be graded on 15 participation points for your contributions to your team.

Finding Appropriate Measures & Finalizing Hypothesis

Step 1: Continue finding sources for your theory and explication of your concepts. Your literature review should have about 15-20 quality citations. Add more content to your outline as you find more sources. The goal is to begin writing your literature review.

Step 2: Begin to make a list of possible measures for your variables. How are the concepts operationalized? What kind of measurement scales are being used? When I am conducting research, I find it helpful to start a list of the measurement scales (and their citations) in a Google document.
Step 3: Submit your **draft hypothesis by the end of class**.

Draft of Survey Questionnaire

Submit a Word document draft of your group's questionnaire for your survey. We will use these drafts to create a Qualtrics survey. Your draft should include:

- The universal class questions we discussed in class.
- Scales for variables with citations, scale type with scale points, items, and question wording/instructions.
- Put the questions in the order you plan to ask them.

You will be graded on participation only for submitting whatever progress you have made so far.

Literature Review and Methods Draft

While we are waiting for your data, it's time to write the first half of your paper.

- **STEP 1**: Return to your activity from Week 5 when you outlined your **Literature Review**. Now it's time to write! Aim for 10-20 citations total for 5-7 double-spaced pages in length.
    - Required sections: Every literature review should (1) detail the overarching theory your paper is contributing to and (2) briefly explicate your independent and dependent variables. Include third variables if applicable to your hypothesis/theory.
    - At the end of your literature review, you should provide one paragraph explaining the rationale for your hypothesis, tying together your literature review.

        - Then, propose your hypothesis as approved by your instructor in class.
            - Follow our example article for guidance
- **STEP 2**: Begin writing your **Methods** section. This is where you detail every step you took to collect data. You should include enough detail so that anyone reading your study should be able to replicate it. This section is usually 3-4 double-spaced pages.
    - Required sections:
        - **Sample**: Who took your survey? (Leave spaces for sample size (*N*), demographics, and donor behavior.)
        - **Procedure**: How did you distribute the survey? What was the process of collecting responses?
        - **Measures**: How did you measure each of your variables? What scale did you use with its sample indicator and scale type? (Leave spaces for mean, standard deviation, and reliability [Cronbach's α].)
- **STEP 3**: Check citations, formatting, and titles for appropriate APA Style 7th edition. Journals are often strict with formatting, so get in good practice now!

You will receive a group grade *subject to peer review* from your group members. Everyone should contribute equally to this project. You may gain or lose points based on your peer reviews.

One submission per group. This will be the first draft of your group project; you will receive feedback from me before your next draft is due.

Prep Data for Statistics Workshop

Come to class prepared to analyze the statistics of your sample. To be prepared, you will need to clean your data *before coming to class*. Follow the steps we reviewed in the class workshop.

1. Download the "choice text" from Qualtrics in an Excel spreadsheet. Clean the test responses (anything dated prior to xx). Convert the choice text to the appropriate numerals.
2. Recode any reverse-coded items.
3. Import the Excel data into SPSS.
4. On the variables tab, convert your nominal variables to numerals using the labels column. Label your interval Likert scales appropriately.
5. Run descriptives on all of your variables to evaluate the measures of central tendency, dispersion, and skew/kurtosis. At this point, you are looking for indications that something is amiss with your data. Check for missing data.
6. Run frequencies to begin assessing your demographic data for your Methods section.

Submit your cleaned Excel file here. I will assess your SPSS file when we are in class.

Literature Review and Methods Revisions

- **STEP 1**: Make changes to your literature review as noted in your first draft. Be sure every sentence that is not your own work is cited!
- **STEP 2**: Finish your Methods section including Sample, Procedure, and Measures as described in the previous draft. Include your demographic data. Create your composite scales and list *M*, *SD*, and Cronbach's alpha.
- **STEP 3**: Check APA style for citations and formatting. Follow the proper indentation and headings!

Grade: Same rubric as last draft. I want to see completeness in this draft as well as good participation. No peer review for this draft but let me know if you are having any difficulties working in your group.

Results Draft and Discussion Outline

Let's begin writing the remaining two major sections for our paper. You will receive a grade for this draft based on quality and completeness.

- **STEP 1**: Write your results section using the format discussed in class. If your results are non-significant, report them anyway! Use APA format for reporting statistics.
- **STEP 2**: Outline some key points for your discussion section as discussed in class. Make sure you have all of the key sections represented and some thoughts listed for each one.
- **STEP 3**: Submit your draft by xx. We can talk about your discussion section and any other questions you have prepping for the presentation and final paper during our meetings (see schedule from sign-ups).

Peer Review Template

The author would like to thank
Brandon Boatwright, assistant professor, Clemson University,
for inspiring the peer review portion of this assignment.

Instructions

This is your peer evaluation for your team's Lit Review and Methods draft.

THIS EVALUATION IS CONFIDENTIAL AND WILL ONLY BE VIEWED BY YOU AND YOUR PROFESSOR.

By completing this peer evaluation, you acknowledge this evaluation is truthful and based on participation and contribution for each individual member. You did not let personal issues influence the assessment of your peers. You understand that peer scoring can negatively or positively impact grades on all group work in COMM xxxx.

1. Consider the assignment requirements as well as all activities accomplished by the group for this assessment. Participation and contribution in group activities is vital in the success of the group. Based on the total output produced by the team, how much has each group member contributed? Place the names of team members in the space below in alphabetical order by last name. DO NOT include yourself in this evaluation. Next to each name, indicate their contribution toward the group's accomplishment using a 0-10 scale (0 = very low contribution to 10 = very high contribution). NOTE: All team members (excluding you) must be rated and no more than two members can have the same score.
2. Take a moment and reflect on the group experience. Please write a few sentences per team member to explain in detail the contribution and participation of EACH team member (including yourself!). Explain what each person worked on toward this draft of the project.

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