

The Women's Studies Research Center Internship:

Student-Scholar Partnership (SSP)

Project Proposal Form ~~Spring 2011~~ Fall 2011

- A. Before submittal, please make sure you have read the "Fall 2010 - Spring 2011 Hiring Guidelines". After review, please return completed proposal packets (includes: form, 3-5 page statement, CV) by **Wednesday, January 5, 2011** to Kristen Mullin, SSP Program Coordinator: mullin@brandeis.edu. Please note: Each project will be awarded 50 hours over the course of the Spring 2011 semester. Thank you.

SCHOLAR INFORMATION

Name: Phyllis R. Silverman

Phone #1: ~~781-861-2000~~

Phone #2:

Brandeis Affiliation: Resident Scholar Women's Studies Research Center

Mailing Address: ~~100 The Esplanade, Boston, MA 02120~~

E-mail: smspr2@brandeis.edu

Are there dates during the semester when you will be traveling/unreachable? Please specify.
Not sure at this date.

PROJECT INFORMATION

Title of Project: Understanding the Needs of Grieving Children

Is this a Continuing SSP Project or a brand-new project? Brand New Project

STUDENT PARTNER INFORMATION

Have you participated in the Student-Scholar Partnership in prior years? Yes X No _____
(Please specify year and student's name if yes) Ashley Sahw 2002-2003

Will you be continuing with a student partner from a previous semester? Yes _____ No X
If continuing, please provide the student's name and contact information:

Do you have a particular new student candidate or candidates with whom you would like to work?
Yes _____ No X

Student-Scholar Partnership
Spring 2011
Project Proposal

If yes, please provide each student's name and contact information:

Please note the Hiring Deadline is rolling so interviews (if appropriate) must be completed as soon as possible after receipt of application.

What is your timeline for work to commence on your research project this semester?
Begin to work wwk of Jan 10,2011

Scholars and faculty members participating in the SSP Program are required to meet with their student research assistants on a weekly basis for supervision.

Please explain how you will fulfill this commitment. Where do you plan to hold supervision meetings?

I will meet with the students at the Women's Studies Research Center at least once a week

And I can be available as needed.

Profile of a Suitable Student Candidate:

Required

Preferable

related coursework _____ Sociology, Psych, Anthro, Social Studies, Religion

technical skills _____ computer and transcribing _____

past experience _____ Interest in bereavement and willing to learn to deal _____

similar professional _____ that would be nice—interest in what it means to help people.. What is help??? _____
interests

other (please indicate) _____

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Please submit a curriculum vitae and a 3-5 page explanation of the following:

1. Describe your research project.
2. What role will the student play in the project? Please be specific regarding expected responsibilities.
3. How will your project benefit from the student's participation?
4. What specific knowledge or skills will the student acquire from carrying out this work?
5. What do you foresee to be the mutual benefits of the mentoring relationship?
6. Please feel free to add any other information you feel relevant.

Any questions? Please direct them to the Student-Scholar Partnership Coordinator, Kristen Mullin, Women's Studies Research Center, Brandeis University, MS 079, Waltham, MA. 02454-9110
Email: mullin@brandeis.edu

Student-Scholar Partnership
Spring 2011
Project Proposal

Understanding the Needs of Grieving Children

This project is part of an initiative that has as its goal evaluating the work of the Children's Room: Center for Grieving Children and Adolescents in Arlington, MA . Its website provides more information about its program. www.childrensroom.com The center serves children and their family whose parent or a sibling has died. They meet every other week. While the parents meet in their own peer support group, the children meet in play groups divided by age. Teens meet in their own group. These peer support groups are facilitated by trained adult volunteers who themselves often have experienced a similar death in their lives. Families stay as long as they feel the need; sometimes up to 2 or 3 years.. There is no charge for the program.

The mission of the Children's Room is to help grieving children, teens and families to go on living and loving fully. They seeks to ensure that children and their families who have suffered the death of a loved one are embraced by a safe and caring community that they can rely upon to help them cope with the grieving process. The guiding idea behind the Children's room work is the belief that grief is a natural and healthy response to loss; grief is a unique process fr each indiciual and with reach of us is a natural capacity to heal. We believe that caring and support assist in the healing process.

I am a founding board member of the Center and chair of the research committee. The r esearch committee consists of professional volunteers who are developing an initiative evalauting the impact of the program on the children and their parent (s). To the extent possible we are conducting the research as well. One aspect of the research project is to try to understand what it is that is helpful about the Children's Room. Why does it work? One aspect of the program that people who have stopped coming keep repeating was that the most important aspect of their experience was meeting others who were in the same situation. What is it about this opportunity to meet others that makes it so unique?

To answer this question we are interviewing families who have decided that they were ready to leave. Interviews have been with parents and children. These are open ended interviews, sometimes with individuals and sometimes with a group. The interviews gather the same information;

1-that is something about the death 2- who died,3- the family structure,4- the family members individual responses,5- how the family found out about the Children's Room,6- what they expected and hoped for, 7-were their expectations met,8- how did the children's room help,9- did this change over time,10- why did you decide it was time to leave. The interviews are tape recorded. They need to be transcribed.

These are open ended interviews so that the interview will follow the train of thought of the interviewee that will guide the interview.

Thus far we have completed four interviews, one in which 3 families participated. In the current semester we are planning 3 more interviews and another group interview.

The student would transcribe these interviews. Themes in each interview have to be identified and highlighted pointing to the key points in what we have learned from them. I will work closely with

the student to teach him/her how to begin a qualitative analysis of these interviews. This will be the main effort in this aspect of the research, pointing to how the Children's Room helped these families and pointing to where other research should take us.

With the student's help I will be able to complete this work during this semester and take the research to the next step. In addition in this type of analysis the student's review of the findings will be very helpful in understanding the findings. Since the student is young they can bring their own understanding to the children's interviews and provide the perspective of a young person to the data. If we can reach some of the teens this will be very important.

Working on a project like this that deals with death that occurs out of its expected place in the life cycle and its consequences for a family, brings this reality in a real way into the life of the researcher. This is an opportunity to look at the life cycle from a new perspective and learn to deal with an aspect of it that is often never talked about in our society. It is a unique opportunity for a student and a challenge for any student. As a mentor I am prepared to help the student deal with this reality and to learn from the extensive literature how to understand and cope.

One way of coping with death in our society is to talk about it as an illness from which, with the proper treatment, the sufferer will be cured. Grief is not an illness, there is no cure. I am very interested in how this view of grief is used in our society, and its consequences for the bereaved. There is a growing literature on what is now called the medicalization of grief that I would like to explore. I would like help from the student, in addition to the research, as time permits, to identify this literature and study some of its consequences. I would like to look at the data gathered in the research taking this point of view.

I see this internship as an opportunity for both myself and the student to grow and learn. I will take the student to visit the Children's Room so that he/she can see what kind of services are available in the community around the University and what it takes to maintain such a program.