

**The Women's Studies Research Center Internship:  
Student-Scholar Partnership (SSP)  
Project Proposal Form Fall 2011**

Please return completed proposal packets (includes: form, 3-5 page statement, CV) by August 16, 2010 to Kristen Mullin, SSP Program Coordinator: [mullin@brandeis.edu](mailto:mullin@brandeis.edu) Thank you.

**SCHOLAR INFORMATION**

Name: Georgia Sassen, Ph.D

Brandeis Affiliation: Visiting Scholar

E-mail: [gsassen@brandeis.edu](mailto:gsassen@brandeis.edu)

Are there dates during the semester when you will be traveling/unreachable? Please specify. Feb break.

**PROJECT INFORMATION**

Title of Project:

DRUMS AND POEMS: Supporting girls' assertiveness and boys' and girls' literacy and relational skills

Field(s) of Research: Psychology, Women's Studies, Music therapy/music, education, social action, non-profit administration

How long will this project last? (Please circle only one.)

A. 50 hours over the course of the Spring semester, option to continue next year.

B. 40-50 hours over the spring semester only.

FLEXIBLE EITHER ONE IS POSSIBLE

Is this a Continuing or brand-new project? Continued – began last year

**STUDENT PARTNER INFORMATION**

Have you participated in the Student-Scholar Partnership in prior years? Yes  No

*(Please specify year and student's name if yes)*

*Amanda Dryer, Ilana Pomerantz. Other students this year who are not SSPs, see below.*

Will you be continuing with a student partner from a previous semester? Yes  No

*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

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

Krista Giuntoli and Adina Weissman are currently working with me as research assistants, but are not funded by the SSP program. I would like to continue with them. See next page.

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They are to be found at :  
kygiuntoli@brandeis.edu (for Krista)  
and adinaw@brandeis.edu (for Adina).

*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? (Please indicate if the project is ongoing or due to start at a particular point during the semester).  
Project is ongoing.

**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 be at WSRC at least twice a week and will meet with the student here.

We will discuss her/his career goals and interest in psychology, education or related fields as well as the research project.

**Profile of a Suitable Student Candidate:**

*Required*

*Preferable*

Related coursework      preferable: psychology, women's studies, education, sociology

Technical skills                      organizational, people skills, computer, writing  
past experience                      work with children \_\_\_\_\_

Similar professional interests relational psychology, gender in psychology, general psychology, education, social action, urban children, action research

Other (please indicate)      \_Ideal candidate is high-energy, wants to work with urban children and can learn to code videos. Psych background is a plus. Writing skills are a plus.

**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.

CV follows in separate attachment -- it will not attach to your format.

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## **Project Description:**

### ***Drums and Poems: A Relationship-Building Intervention for At-risk Children***

During the last decade, I created and refined "Art from the Heart", using visual arts to help girls build relational skills, negotiation and conflict resolution skills, and to express themselves even if English is their second language or their culture enjoins them to be silent. In January 2010, at WSRC, I began the pilot phase of a new project with similar goals: Drums and Poems. This was a logical offshoot of art from the heart: again the arts are used to help children build relational skills, but this time literacy skills are also developed. This time boys and girls must work together to build communal art work – rhythms and poems.

The project was successful, drawing in third graders and engaging them in poem-making even if they had never liked poems or language at all. Children who had been very active, possibly diagnosable, settled in and paid attention and created. At times though, one to one support was needed, especially when we experimented with a second grade group. In the older group, some girls were outspoken and led the group in creating but for some girls, their lack of familiarity with English, though they spoke well, made them hold back on creating or negotiating with the rest of the group. Some of the boys, loud in any setting, used the drums as a way to grab the floor. Thus gender is a central issue in refining the process of Drums and Poems. This year we have very assertive girls and we are working with the nonassertive girls to make themselves heard..

We have now gathered a year's worth of qualitative data on video and coded it; this gives us a basis for writing about the project. Students may join in writing about it if they wish and possibly present at a conference if they are able. We hope to give a training on Drums and Poems for counselors and educators this year, with students' help. Web design skills or interest will be helpful here and can be learned at Getz Media Lab if the student has time.

### **The rationale and implementation of the project:**

#### **Rationale**

- 1: Neuropsychologists have shown that rhythm helps children self-regulate.
2. Drumming is culturally syntonic to African-American, Caribbean and Latin cultures and enticing to children. And for all children, noise=fun.
3. Poetry, on the other hand, has great literacy-building potential but is seen as "school-like" and might repel English language learners and Children with poor verbal skills. But building poems based on rhythms, speaking poems before writing them, is interactive and engaging. Drums and Poems uses all of these innovative techniques.
4. Girls need to reclaim rap. Rap has become a sexist and violent medium in many cases, and some rappers have tried to reclaim it and "rap for peace". Some female rappers have brought a feminist perspective. . Girls can reclaim rap and learn about sexism and the costs of violence in the process.
5. Working together on art builds connection between people. Jamming has been a connection-builder in many oppressed cultures, with its roots in ancient cultures the world over. This project uses these in a feminist, literacy-building way.

#### **Implementation:**

A typical session: Children build communal poems based on rhythms they beat out on hand drums, settling on one rhythmic line. One group creates the rhythmic line, then the other group fits a line of a poem to the rhythm.. The children will build a poem together, learning about poetic rhythms first,

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moving on to the meaning of words, the sounds of words and how they make their own music. Funny poetry will be encouraged (see work sample).

Ten children have signed up for ten weekly sessions of Drums and Poems.

#### Summary

This project helps at-risk children in an after school program to find their voices, connection with other children and build literacy skills. At a Waltham public school, they use hand drums and create poems and raps based on the rhythms of each other's drumming. They build communal poems, replicating the author's visual arts work with middle school girls in Lowell, MA.

#### **What role will the student play in the project? What skills will s/he learn?**

Last year's Student Scholar Partners were part time so one attended each session and learned to run the drums and poems session, while the other coded videos taken during the session. Paid through a separate source, another student developed the web site which publicizes Drums and Poems to educators and parents.

This year I have three assistants, working well as a group. One will be paid through a separate source, Building Resilience in Kids, next spring. They attend the D and P sessions and learn the process by observing a video, and now they learn by doing, assisting me in leading the children in drumming and making poems. A new student could do the same, and she will set up the video before the session (this will be taught) and later edit video to make a series of vignettes that can be shown to educators (editing skills not required – they will be taught). If there are two SSPs part time they will divide these duties.

Last year, one student also interviewed a parent about the child's experience in D and P, and another helped with the literature review for a paper. These are options for this year's student. Helping with a presentation at a conference of psychologists is also an option. If a student wishes she can use her interviewing or observation as the basis for a paper for a course. This year the students will also learn about action research, in which videos and notes are reviewed with reflexivity in order to refine the D and P intervention.

Depending on their interests, students will learn about working with urban children, teaching relational skills, and teaching two art forms: music and poetry. They will have experience with children at risk for interpersonal and learning problems, and have the benefit of seeing these problems through the eyes of a relational psychologist who also has an education and community organizing background. These skills are useful in the urban education setting as well as for future academic pursuits – senior thesis or graduate school. Students will learn about using video to record and then analyze the intervention and the children's reactions to it.

Students will have the opportunity if they wish to learn about writing up a project like this for presentation to other psychologists and to educators. If they wish they will learn the organizational skills involved in publicizing and running a training for professionals, including writing press releases and web content. They will learn video editing skills. Poetry and musical ability is not required but for those who have it this is a way to learn to use it to support social justice and help young people in a practical way – which could lead to a job after graduation.

Students will learn grant writing skills if they wish.

### **Mutual benefits of the mentoring relationship**

**The drums and poems project has been marked by a mutual respect between the mentor and the students – the student’s knowledge is valued and her opinions are listened to.**

Students will benefit by learning the skills above and by having the opportunity to discuss their own career goals with a clinical psychologist who has a private practice and also uses her training to advance social justice and creativity among children. They will benefit from using their psychology knowledge outside the academic realm. The mentor will benefit from the invaluable help running the sessions – with ten urban children in the room, and the twin goals of building relational skills and academic (writing) skills, this is essential. The student’s help in recording and coding the sessions is also essential. It is impossible to lead and record well at the same time, and it is best to have more than one coder on any project (to achieve interrater reliability).

I have mentored many young women as they work on social change projects with me. This year I am working with a student who is receiving course credit for her work. I can provide a model of using psychology in a socially active way. I benefit from the freshness a student brings to the project. As we discuss how the program is going the student and I will exchange ideas and have a mutually engaging intellectual ongoing conversation.

**IF STUDENTS HAVE QUESTIONS ABOUT THE INTERNSHIP IT IS FINE TO EMAIL ME BEFORE WE MEET. [GSASSEN@BRANDEIS.EDU](mailto:GSASSEN@BRANDEIS.EDU)**

**CV follows in separate attachment -- it will not attach to your form.**

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](mailto:mullin@brandeis.edu) Phone messages: (781) 736-3046