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Having previously worked with Dr. Abir-Am in the 2008-2009 school year, we continued our investigation into the role that gender plays in allocation of credit for scientific discovery. Our previous research pertained to collaborative couples, especially the case of the Lederbergs in 1958, in which only Joshua Lederberg received the Nobel Prize for work he had collaborated on with his wife, Esther Lederberg, who was omitted from the prize. We had also talked about the misallocation of credit for the discovery of DNA structure (excluding Rosalind Franklin as a discoverer). This semester we moved our focus to the 2009 Nobel Prizes, in which women achieved parity with men for the first time. We particularly focused on Elizabeth Blackburn and Carol Greider, who received the 2009 Nobel Prize in Physiology for their discovery of the enzyme telomerase; Jack Szostak also shared this prize for his work with Blackburn on telomeres (telomeres are important in the process of regulating cellular aging and cancer development).

Elizabeth Blackburn (1947) and Carol Greider (1951) are a particularly interesting case study because during their work on telomerase, Greider had been a graduate student of Blackburn’s. It is unusual for a student to receive this kind of recognition, let alone a female student. We wanted to research what it was about these two women and their collaboration that allowed both of them to receive the 2009 Nobel Prize.

Until affirmative action in the 1970s, it was a struggle for women to go into academia. Most universities had a bias towards tenuring men, and were not very welcoming workplaces for women. This included UC Berkeley, where Blackburn eventually became a tenured professor. For example, Ellen Daniell (2006) was not tenured after seven years at UC Berkeley possibly because nobody told her that in order to get through the tenure process, a woman had to produce more than the average man. Blackburn, witnessing Ellen’s struggles, was more prepared, and eventually received tenure.

In 1984 Blackburn met Carol Greider upon Greider’s acceptance to UC Berkeley as a graduate student. Greider immediately gravitated towards Blackburn and her work in the unexplored field of telomeres. The circumstances were favorable for their collaboration because Blackburn had just been tenured and had research money to put towards new, more risky projects. This, along with Greider’s youthful enthusiasm, gave Blackburn the mental freedom to pursue this innovative line of research. Greider, for her part, had a good experience working with a women advisor in Santa Barbara. So their timing was...
perfect: had it been a decade ago, this sort of collaboration would have been impossible.

There are still more areas to research to find out why Blackburn and Greider’s collaboration was so successful. How did the fact that they were both women influence their productive collaboration? Did they receive the Nobel Prize late (a quarter of a century after the discovery)? For example, they had received the Rosenstiel Award (awarded by Brandeis University, which we attended in 2009-2010), which is considered to be a good Nobel Prize predictor, in 1999. As we continue to research this topic, we hope to shed light on the complex process of distributive justice in the allocation of credit to women in science.
As academia is often faced with charges of being “All Talk No Action,” charges to which I sometimes subject myself, I was eager to take part in my action-oriented SSP assignment. The project: organize a conference to explore contemporary media portrayal of gender differences. This conference was to take place a mere three weeks after my partnership commenced; yet I braced myself, and was able to thoroughly enjoy this refreshing change in my involvement with gender studies, previously comprised of exploring sociological theory regarding gender.

Dr. Rosalind Barnett organized the Ann Richards Roundtable Conference, to create a space for discussion amongst journalists and researchers concerned with the media’s presentation of gender difference. Though I was wary of the conference date fast approaching, my role in preparation submerged me in the relevant research to the extent that I quickly became familiar with the issues and personalities at hand. Dr. Barnett directed my creation of a booklet containing articles from popular periodicals and academic journals for participants to reference during the course of the conference. These articles served to familiarize me with the content and concerns of contemporary gender research, and the significance of its presence in shaping national education and employment policies. As I searched through works taking various stances regarding issues such as single-sex schooling and GPA gender disparities, I correspondingly delved into the work of the journalists and researchers invited to the conference. As the conference proceeded and participants flipped through the booklet, I took notes on the conversation, recording the developing plans to rethink the presentation of gender research to the media. These ideas were formed in reaction to the dismaying amount of attention paid to an illegitimate and politically informed body of work that is currently in the gender spotlight.

Once we wrapped up the conference and its accompanying paperwork, Dr. Barnett and I set to assess interest in a follow-up conference, encouraging the participants to stay connected to each other, share new work, and further develop and enact strategies to affect the media’s presentation of gender. Besides remaining involved with organizing future meetings of the conference participants, I assisted Dr. Barnett in maintaining her collection of references to scientific and academic articles concerning gender differences. This work afforded me continuous updates within this arena of research. I am confident that my work with the WSRC throughout the semester will result in a similar understanding of the source and significance of gender differences, for those both inside and outside of academia, as Dr. Barnett and her colleagues harness.
the media as a tool for encouraging innovative and equitable conceptions of
gender.

Scholar: Mary Berg
Student: Lisa Fitzgerald
Project: Translation for Publication of 'Viaje de recreo' by Clorinda Matto de
Turner (1852-1909)

This semester I had the opportunity to work with scholar Mary G. Berg on a new edition of a 1909 book, *Viaje de recreo*, by Clorinda Matto de Turner (1852-1909). Matto was a Peruvian writer and journalist with a passion for female empowerment and education. She is best known for her 1889 novel *Aves sin nido*; it was very controversial for its critique of the Catholic Church. She was excommunicated and in 1895 she left Peru to live in exile in Buenos Aires, Argentina. In 1908 she was sent by an Argentine teachers’ group to study European education for women, and she traveled extensively in Spain, England, France, Italy and Switzerland.

*Viaje de recreo*, like a precursor to a modern travel guide, is the log of her visit to Europe and was published upon her death in 1909. Mary G. Berg has taken on the task of republishing the book with a reinterpreted perspective and a more accessible style in order to inspire interest and to give readers a glimpse of Europe in the early 1900s through the eyes of Clorinda Matto de Turner.

Our task has been to prepare the text for publication by the Spanish language publisher Stockcero in Buenos Aires and for use by students of Latin American literature in the US and Europe. I offered the student perspective; I highlighted the themes that I found most interesting so that they would be emphasized and I identified sections that were in need of more context and clarification through footnoting. For example, the text references a large number of historical figures, writers, and especially important women. In order to pay homage to these women as well as to direct readers to sources for future research, I wrote brief historical footnotes and blurbs that will be included in the published work. Close reading and research were also necessary for editing the text.

The project taught me about Latin American literature in a whole new context. Working with Mary Berg, I learned about the many possible approaches to *Viaje de recreo* and we developed a perspective for the
introduction as well as a thematic thread in the footnotes that guides the reader through the text.
My name is Lesli Jebahar. I am a double majoring in Art History and Women and Gender Studies, and minoring in Politics. I worked with Susan Eisenberg, a former electrician and an artist, among many things, in the Spring of 2010.

When I first saw Susan Eisenberg’s project combining art with activism and women’s issues I knew it would be a perfect opportunity for me to gain insight on many things. On Equal Terms is an art exhibition about women in the construction industry and their experiences in the male-dominated occupation. The exhibition fuses artistic creations with personal testimonies with the hope of starting discussion and raising awareness about occupational segregation.

Earlier in our partnership, Susan showed me her poems on the same subject and shared with me anecdotes about the struggles of women she knew in the industry. As an art history student interested in curatorial studies, I was very happy to learn about the backdrop of an exhibition and all the experiences that lead to it.

During our partnership I assisted Susan with various tasks: managed the facebook page of her show, brainstormed ideas for some aspects of her installation, converted analog tapes to digitals, followed up with fundraising efforts for her show and contributed my ideas. Susan is the artist, curator and the manager of her show. She personally fundraises for the touring of On Equal Terms. Susan always kept me updated about her meetings with donors, email correspondences with various institutions to make the touring of her installation possible. I learned about financial and logistic aspects of art exhibitions at first-hand.

In addition to all the work related to On Equal Terms, Susan and I often talked about my summer internship plans. Susan was always curious and interested about the places I applied and whether I received a response from them. She suggested me a few organizations that I could apply that were related to my interests. It was really nice to have her support and advice during that period. I also met a gallery owner who agreed to answer a few questions about my summer plans through Susan.

Overall, I had a very enjoyable experience working with Susan. Knowing about her artworks and many shows, her efforts as an artist to exhibit her work in different states, her experiences with various people such as female construction workers, NGO executives and installation managers was very valuable for me.
This year I worked with Dr. Lisa Fishbayn, director of the Project on Gender, Culture, Religion and the Law. Dr. Fishbayn has examined the manner in which courts in the United States and Canada have been able to increase gender equality in Jewish and Muslim divorce. For example, she wrote an article about how courts in Canada and New York have helped women obtain a gett, a Jewish religious divorce, when their husbands were initially withholding it. I learned a lot about the intricacies and difficulties of crafting divorce law that would have the desired effect of helping women get out of their religious marriages from Dr. Fishbayn’s writings. I had not previously considered the use of civil law to help shape the outcome of religious law and I found my work with Dr. Fishbayn to be fascinating, both theoretically and how it was practically administered.

I performed several research projects to help Dr. Fishbayn write a forward for the book she is editing with articles on the same subject as our project. I began by trying to understand how many Jewish women are considered agunot, or are unable to obtain a religious divorce from their husbands. In order to do this it was necessary to first understand the distinction of how women’s rights groups and religious leaders define who is an agunah. While it is not really possible to give a precise numerical figure of this population due to the different facets of such a calculation, I spoke with numerous groups in the United States helping women in such a situation to try to estimate the figures at least in the U.S. Although there was no definite answer to the research question, understanding why it was so difficult to know how many agunot there are was also valuable knowledge. Another project I did for Dr. Fishbayn pertained to khul, a type of Muslim divorce which women are able to initiate. I wrote a report with the basics about the origins and use of khul within mainstream Islamic jurisprudence and how it has been revived in many modern Muslim states. I also analyzed the similarities between the divorce situations of Jewish and Muslim women. The fact that the use of khul divorce has so recently been accepted in countries such as Egypt and Morocco made this area of research particularly exciting. I also studied how Muslim divorce has been used in courts in Canada and the United States by researching a prominent legal scholar on the topic, Pascale Fournier. I hope to continue to study family law in Islam and its application in Muslim and secular nations in the future.

I enjoyed my Student-Scholar Partnership experience. I was able to delve
into issues that interested me, and hopefully my material was helpful to Dr.
Fishbayn for her writing. I have certainly gained a new understanding of the
role of courts and how they may be used to increase equality even in the
religious sphere.
When Julie Goodman and I returned to our collaboration this spring, Julie had already spent a year blogging about body size, shape and attributes in a three-part series dealing with heightism, weightism and sexism. This year, she wanted to dig deeper into her interest in sociology and came up with the idea to blog about gender in fitness. She was inspired by a recent trip to a gym on campus after a New Year’s Resolution. She writes:

After two-and-a-half years of a sedentary college lifestyle, I have finally made exercise a priority and now hit the gym. I admit that I am getting hooked, so much so that I have mentioned my newfound commitment to many friends. While everyone seemed supportive, one friend caught me off guard with his response.

“Which gym did you visit?” he asked.

I identified the small one near my dorm rather than the main athletic complex, to which he replied, “Oh, you mean the girl gym!”

The girl gym?

I was taken aback.

The gym is the logical workout location for all upperclassmen like me, given its convenient location near junior and senior dorms. This begs the question – what is it about the gym that makes it girlie?

The full blog piece appears on two websites. 
http://www.eatingdisordersblogs.com/ed_science_stuff/ and http://blog.trishagura.com/. It will impact tens of thousands of readers, generally individuals who suffer from eating disorders and body image problems as well as the clinicians who treat such problems. Julie offers a fresh voice that rings true. College campuses are petri dishes for body image malcontent. And Julie’s insights into the fitness regimens and attitudes we all take for granted these days will prompt many readers to step back and reflect on an otherwise hidden gender bias inherent in our culture. This truly represents
the mission of the WSRC – to point an arrow toward inconsistencies and falsities in our world and how those impact women.

Julie’s Contribution:

This past semester, I have had the opportunity to consider the gendered nature of fitness and its implications through the process of planning, writing, and editing a blog post on the subject. I enjoyed the experience, as it allowed me to articulate ideas which I had previously considered but never fully developed. I also appreciated the chance to further refine my own voice as a writer, as the practice of blogging involves an entirely different set of skills than does academic writing.

I hope that readers of this post reconsider their own orientations towards fitness rhetoric and what it means to care for their bodies, and hopefully enact positive changes in their lives that will improve their well-being. I feel strongly that gendered fitness has erupted into an eyesore in Western culture, and it is pivotal that we begin to alter the discourse and our practices. While one post cannot topple the media’s monolithic stance on this issue, it does have the power to challenge it.
Many living in America imagine that slavery ended with the Civil War. In fact, slavery still exists in every country on the globe, even in our home states. Human trafficking, or what is often referred to as modern day slavery, is the second most lucrative crime in the world. According to a report from the United States’ Department of Justice, there are an estimated 27 million people enslaved. People are trafficked for sex or labor so that others can profit. In my time as a research assistant at the Schuster Institute for Investigative Journalism, I was able to research issues relating to human trafficking.

I was interested in the issue of human trafficking before I began my work at the Schuster Institute. This past summer, I was an intern at Love146, a non-profit organization working to abolish child sexual exploitation. Working at the Schuster Institute allowed me to continue working on an issue that I am very passionate about and gave me the skills to become a better researcher. This past semester I have learned how to thoroughly research a topic, how to determine whether or not a source is credible, and to critically examine how the media presents a story.

I was also responsible for looking at a wide range of sources for stories on prostitution, human trafficking, and pimping. Some of the sources were respected scholarly books and newspaper articles while others were blog posts. When researching a particular case or topic, I made sure to find legal, social, and legislative perspectives to gain more understanding of the issue. After doing this research, I was then responsible for judging what information would be valuable to my scholar. I then summarized and synthesized the research and put it into a usable format for my scholar.

Through my research, I was constantly reminded of the ongoing injustices in the world and that many happen in my own area. Being a part of the Student Scholar Partnership has opened new doors for me. I was able to gain skills that are important for both college and future jobs. I am fortunate that my project allowed me to continue working on an issue I was already passionate about, and I am sure that whatever I research next will be just as interesting.
Margaret Morganroth Gullette
Student: Stephanie Spiro
Project: Field of Age-ism

Margaret’s book *Agewise* (U of Chicago Press, 2011) is an attempt to make ageism seem urgent—a trend in dominant American culture that has been worsening over the past thirty years, with not only discursive consequences but also grave economic, social, and psychological consequences. Some are lethal.

Stephanie worked for Margaret only in the spring semester. This is her second term working with Margaret as a student partner. Aside from doing some last-minute research, Stephanie has mainly been engaged in reading chapters of Margaret’s *Agewise*, in order to help complete its index. She looked for important themes and concepts within each chapter to include in the index and highlighted them to make the work of putting page numbers in the index—the last phase of the author’s work—easier. (The index is only of keywords. Margaret believes that an index for a topic as undertheorized as age is not only a finding guide but a teaching tool.) The work requires simultaneously—close attention to language and the ability to keep the whole book in mind conceptually. Stephanie went through about half the text in this way. Margaret feels that Stephanie noticed some topics that she had overlooked, and is grateful for the skills Stephanie brought to this demanding task. Stephanie is mentioned in the acknowledgments to *Agewise*.

This activity has helped Stephanie understand the process of preparing a book for publishing as well as heightened her sensitivity towards the structure and organization of texts. She has gained knowledge about age studies through her reading of the book’s drafts and her discussions with Margaret. Stephanie hopes to continue learning about ageism and its societal consequences and believes her partnership with Margaret has helped her own writing, reading, and critical thinking skills. Margaret is mentioned in the acknowledgments to the thesis.

The two also discussed Stephanie’s thesis on religion and interfaith connections at several meetings. Some of the conversation was about clarifying major ideas in the introduction and conclusion. Some was about shaping the material for publication in a Brandeis outlet. Stephanie is grateful for Margaret’s suggestions, and Margaret’s edits to and comments about the thesis introduction have been beneficial for the completion of the thesis.
Working as a research assistant this semester in the Student Scholar Partnership program through the WSRC has been a rewarding and transformative experience. I approached the Alice Hoffman Novel project with both excitement and trepidation because although I am very interested in ancient Israel circa 70AD, I have never enjoyed conducting research. However, after meeting with Alice for the first time I realized how engaging her questions were and was surprised at my eagerness to find the answers. Over the course of the semester, my responsibilities have included locating and organizing data relating to this period, (including discovering relevant texts and attending lectures on related topics) and presenting my work to Alice once a week. I am currently working on a glossary of terms for the back of the book. Our meetings consisted of lively discussions about what we had both discovered the week before and what she still needed to know in order to complete her novel.

As I stated before, conducting research was initially difficult for me. At first it took me many hours to find the relevant information that I was looking for. Then, I began working with Brandeis’s research librarians who taught me ways to refine my searches to specific databases, and how to use my time more efficiently. I learned the importance of keeping track of one’s sources and learned techniques to search more accurately. For example, a “wild-card” is the term for a type of search with an asterisk at the end of a word. The asterisk brings up every permutation of that word, so a search for bake* would bring up bake, baking, baker, bakery, etc. These might seem like a trivial bit of information, but knowing several of these researching tools has proven invaluable to my capacity to research well.

Over the course of the semester I learned where to look to find relevant information and how to research quickly and effectively. I taught myself how to sift through long articles in order to write up short but cohesive summaries. Above all, I learned that research can be thrilling and rewarding when the researcher is actually interested in the research! This experience of working on the Alice Hoffman Novel has made me realize how interested I am in this period, and I am now seriously considering writing a thesis on the Dura Europos synagogue built around 200CE.

Working with Alice was wonderful because she kept me up to date on which sources she herself was using and was even kind enough to purchase
copies of these books for me to read. She also set up meetings with the WSRC librarian which were very informative and helpful. I feel privileged to be part of this project and I hope that I have aided, and will continue to aid, Alice in her creative process of writing an historical fiction novel. My goal is that the information I have discovered will help Alice bring history to life in her novel, transforming it from a book into a portal to the past.
Rachel and I worked together last winter and spring, and stepped back into our partnership this autumn. I was both grateful and impressed that Hilda chose to resume work with me on my project at that time, given that funding was unavailable through the fall term.

Hilda and I met frequently through the autumn months, and our work at that time was similar to what we’d done the prior spring: each week I’d present her with a few questions. (Examples: What’s known about the presence and activities of Inquisition (religious) spies in 1660s London? Can you find me the text of the 1662 proceedings of the Royal Society? What portion of London’s Jews fled the walled City of London during the plague?) In each case Hilda researched, contacted experts locally and abroad if necessary, and reported back to me – usually via e-mail before the week was up. The difference between this autumn’s work and last spring’s was merely that both Hilda and I had gained a great deal of knowledge about 17th Century London and the Jewish community of the time, so our work was more targeted, the questions narrower.

During the winter, when it became clear that I was ready to embark on the on-the-ground portion of the research, Hilda began helping me plan a trip to London. Hilda worked hard on setting up appointments with archivists, arranging interviews and museum visits and walking tours of the relevant areas of London and neighboring Richmond during the very tight time frame available to me. Fortunately, I was able to use some grant money from an outside source to bring Hilda with me. This meant that we could travel together to the places we’d been researching, trade off asking questions in interviews, compare notes, and sometimes split up and head to different locations to as to maximize our information-gathering during the time we had.

I felt that the trip was enormously productive. The very careful work Hilda has done over the past year and a half paid off nicely – there were amazingly few surprises, no significant arenas where our research had misled us. The research we did together in London greatly enhanced my understanding of the places and history I’m writing about.

Since our return, Hilda has been helping me with follow-up questions, tracking down books we were referred to, and generally making sure we make the most of every contact and lead from the 6 days we were in London. I’m grateful for her partnership in this work, and I know that the level of comfort I now have with the historical world of my novel would simply not have been possible without her help. I’ll write a better novel because she worked with me.
Hilda:

Working with Rachel over the course of this year felt kind of like zeroing in on a target we’ve been hovering over for some time. Our work last spring was dedicated to answering some of the bigger questions Rachel had about the setting of the novel. This year, we’ve spent much of our time researching relevant details that Rachel will use to contextualize and enrich her story.

This spring, Rachel brought me with her to London to do some in-depth research and soak up what remained of the 17th century Jewish community. Rachel and I had spent a lot of time over the course of fall and spring semesters narrowing down the sites that would be most important for us to visit. About a month before our trip, we sat down and hammered out an extremely detailed itinerary of where we would go and what we would see. Even though things didn’t always go exactly as planned while we were there, preparing carefully beforehand allowed us to be flexible and adjust when necessary.

Our trip was incredibly useful for Rachel in that she was able to confirm much of what we had already discovered in our research. While it was gratifying to learn that our research at home was largely on target, it was also interesting to see how there is no real substitute for immersing yourself in the world you wish to write about. An example of this was when Rachel and I discovered that the oldest synagogue in London was actually much closer to the old London wall than we originally thought. Rachel realized she would need to re-work a certain scene in her novel to account for this fact. Visiting the actual sites and gaining an understanding of the spatial orientation of key parts of London clarified things in a way no map or description could have done.

In watching Rachel navigate the intersection of history and fiction, I’ve learned how important it is to strike a balance between getting things right and writing the story that you want to tell. Though content and characters are her bread and butter, I admire her commitment to accurately depicting the historical period in which she is writing. I am incredibly grateful for the many opportunities our partnership has provided me, and for Rachel’s extensive help and guidance as I pursue my post-graduation plans. Working with her has been one of the most enjoyable and significant experiences I’ve had as an undergraduate at Brandeis.
The specific gender-based perspective is missing in current frameworks of food safety education and programmes that recognizes the major roles women play in the food supply system worldwide (including the production, processing, marketing, purchase, preparation and storage of food). The Food and Agriculture Organization states that women produce between 60 and 80 percent of the food in most developing countries and are responsible for half of the world’s food production.

This project, “Women and Safe Food” seeks to explore and analyze the range of “life contact points” of women in key areas related to food safety, in order to create a targeted food safety educational module. Therefore, it is aimed at assessing the specific food safety educational needs of women in food supply systems of developing countries. The research question is two-pronged, being: What are the specific food safety issues in these developing countries? What is the most effective woman-centered, food safety education model to address these issues? The overall objective is to equip women in the food supply system with a food safety education that will prevent the spread of foodborne illnesses and improve the health and social well being of their societies.

We compiled the pre-existing, cumulative, internationally recognized food safety knowledge and experiences with our own experiences, to develop an educational module specifically targeting women involved in the food supply systems of developing countries. In order to test the effectiveness of the module, we are planning a workshop with immigrant women in the United States, specifically working with low-income women at the Waltham Family School. This program has been constructed to provide basic food safety education as recommended by “Five Keys to Food Safety”, proposed by the World Health Organization (WHO). We expanded those five basic principles to provide a more comprehensive educational model developed in the framework of the “Women and Safe Food” project. We will be using a number of different low cost media sources, such as combination of PowerPoint presentations, slides, videos, and verbal explanations, to meet the specific educational needs of these immigrant workers. Pre- and post evaluations of the training will be used to improve our training module in the future.

The role of the Student partner in this project was to conduct research of the most current materials concerning food safety education. The student spent a great deal of time finding relevant articles, creating educational training materials and questionnaires, testing questionnaires and building a food safety
vocabulary. The project provided her with an excellent opportunity to combine her knowledge and experiences in a collaborative, progressive setting.

Our hope is that the educational materials created and the feedback that will be received from the assessments at the Waltham Family School can be used to improve the materials and restructure them to educate both immigrant women and women internationally. Ultimately, the “Women and Safe Food” project will raise the magnitude of food safety and nutrition education for all women in the food supply system.
“Taking Care: Lessons from Mothers with Disabilities,” based on twenty-six interviews and other autobiographical narratives, challenges the negative stereotypes about women with disabilities as mothers. These women’s stories tell of their successes despite the barriers they encounter from the society in which they live. Covering issues in the mothering cycle from pregnancy and birth to raising a child through adulthood, the mothers’ experiences and strategies provide valuable information for other women with disabilities and for doctors and health professionals as well as providing some lessons for all mothers.

My student partner, Sarah Linet has joined me enthusiastically in pursuing this project. She has provided me with current research on mothers with disabilities found in articles and books. She has read many of the women’s interview transcripts and written an analysis of the important issues revealed. Based on her experience of growing up with a mother with a disability, her point of view has been invaluable. She also consented to be interviewed about her own experience of being a daughter of a mother with multiple sclerosis, again, giving an important alternate focus on the project.

Sarah’s Statement:

I applied to participate in this project with a degree of trepidation. My mother’s illness has in one way or another affected much of my life but it has never directly impacted the course of my academic study. I have lived with the daily influence that my mother’s multiple sclerosis has had on my life very much in a degree of isolation. I never knew other disabled mothers; I never interacted with other children of disabled parents (that I knew of). I came across this project while I was looking for a new job senior year at Brandeis. The uncertainty I felt about participating stemmed from the personal nature of this project. I think that the student/scholar partnership means many different things to different people. Certainly it is an opportunity to work closely with a scholar and for many people it is a chance to do academic research for the first time outside of the confines of the classroom. For me it was so much more. I was not sure I was ready to face my mother’s illness and the effect that it has had on me in the way that I thought that this project would demand. I was not sure I wanted to spend my last semester at Brandeis thinking deeply about the idea of disabled motherhood, about my own mother’s journey as a parent. Despite my misgivings I applied and from my very first meeting with Professor Mason my anxiety eased.
This project was a unique opportunity to form a partnership with a truly talented scholar with extraordinary insight. It was also an incredible opportunity to conduct research for a (hopefully) soon to be published work. More than that this project gave me insight into a world in which I have belonged against my will, but knew very little about. This project gave me an outlet to express my views and hopefully give Professor Mason a perspective she would not have otherwise had. While this might not be true for other partnerships or other projects when I felt I could be most valuable to this project when I was looking at the work Professor Mason had already completed, or interviews she had already conducted and provide her with my perspective.

This project has been nothing like what I had imagined. It has been a transformative experience and one that I have really valued. This partnership was one more unexpected surprise. It was not what I thought I was looking for but it turned out to be the perfect experience to close out my time at Brandeis.
Ruth and I have had a wonderful year together in the Student-Scholar Partnership. I first sought to work with Ruth when I read that she was working on publicizing her recent book, *Don’t Bite Your Tongue: How to Foster Rewarding Relationships with Your Adult Children* (Palgrave/Macmillan 2008). I have my own aspirations of perhaps one day writing a book, and I thought that working closely with a published author would be a very worthwhile experience. Ruth’s project required me to work closely with her in order to contact organizations where she could speak, and together we accomplished this to great success.

Our time together as student and scholar has been one marked with great reciprocity and growth. In addition to helping Ruth with her correspondence and article writing, I offer Ruth a keen eye for grammar and punctuation, as well as several new insights on her topic of parenting adult children. In turn, she offers me a view of the world of networking and self-publicity. She has introduced me to a number of scholars around the Women’s Studies Research Center, as well as some of her contacts as she travels the country. The reciprocal nature of our partnership highlights the growth that we facilitate for one another. We have been able to teach one another some of the intricacies of computers, and as a result, we have made for quite the productive team.

Together, Ruth and I have found many new venues at which she could speak, and we also discovered new media for reaching out to previously undiscovered audiences. Specifically, we reached out to Jewish Community Centers across the nation and even the world, and scheduled Ruth’s trips accordingly.

When Ruth suffered a house fire, I helped her to itemize all of her lost belongings. When I expressed need of a bicycle, Ruth was glad to give me her husband’s, as he no longer needed it. These actions were done outside of the guidelines of the Student-Scholar Partnership, but in many ways these actions are a testament to the help we offer one another. Once our project ends, I am certain that we will remain in close contact for our mutual benefit. This friendship, borne of the SSP, will endure long after the official internship has ended.
This semester I had the pleasure of working on a book proposal for “Writing the Short Screenplay: The Alternative View”, with Nancy Salzer. I feel very fortunate to have done so. The project not only enabled me to have a better understanding of what a short film can be, through it, I also learned to handle better my own creative work.

Our efforts began with film screenings. Both me and Nancy looked up short films wherever we could find them. We viewed them together, and at each point discussed the different forms, and what worked, or didn’t work in each.

Later, came the book research stage. We searched for as many books dealing with short films, and short film screenwriting as we could find, and read through them, trying to figure out what gave each its distinct voice and room on the bookshelf. Nancy who already had a pretty good idea of how she would outline her book, and what the content would be, also wanted to make sure that there is a need for a new publication in the market. That the book she’s writing is not redundant.

The next stage was looking up potential filmmakers who might agree to have parts of their screenplays published in the book as examples that will be discussed in depth. We ultimately would also like to interview some of them about their writing process. So at this moment I am contacting them for permission.

Simultaneously I’m also looking up publication houses that would potentially publish and distribute the book. Then, we’ll need write up the book proposal, and the accompanying documents and send them out.

I hope this book gets published in the next couple of years. I have a lot of faith in it. As a student filmmaker, I’ve gone through many screenwriting books. As Nancy intern I’ve gone through what seems to be most of them. Honestly I think that there’s a lot lacking in most publications. Out of dozens there might be two that actually deal with the creative aspect of screenwriting.

The majority of books analyze the genre and give their readers a list of do’s and don’ts. But when it comes to writing screenplays that connect, that are true and meaningful, they offer no insight except simply stating “write something meaningful”.

I also believe that Nancy’s book will be very helpful because it’ll offer more exercises that are tremendously important to writers. Exercises break down huge and daunting writing goals into bite-sized tasks. In this way exercises unleash imagination and creativity that large general statements about what a screenplay should, or should not be, suffocate. I believe this book is necessary, and I’m glad that I got to take part in shaping it.
Joanne Qiao, Student Partner:

Working with Dr. Thomson on the project, “Assessing Outcomes at a Residential Treatment Center for Adolescent Girls,” has been the most fulfilling experience at Brandeis. We interviewed parents and guardians, social workers and/or the girls themselves three months and one year after discharge to collect qualitative and quantitative information, including post-discharge living situations, education, any hospitalizations and satisfaction with services received at Germaine Lawrence.

As a Student Partner, I had the opportunity to explore several aspects of the research process, including reviewing the existing literature on residential treatment centers, interviewing the girls and/or parents and guardians over the phone, and analyzing data using Excel.

Researching and visiting the residential treatment center, Germaine Lawrence, really helped me feel connected to the research project. My favorite component of the project was interviewing the families because it allowed me to know the cases on a personal basis and helped me develop interpersonal and clinical skills, which will be very helpful in the future. Weekly meetings with Dr. Thomson were very helpful because I received support and feedback on a regular basis and had the opportunity to ask any questions.

I was able to develop a special relationship with Dr. Thomson over the academic year. Besides discussing the research, we discussed classes and career paths. I have a much better understanding of my academic and career goals thanks to the conversations.

I am very grateful that I had the opportunity to work on a project that I have a special interest in with an intelligent, inspiring and support scholar. The experience, both the research and the mentorship, has been invaluable.

Dr. Thomson:

Joanne Qiao brought many academic strengths and experiences to this project that allowed us to work together very effectively. Her background as a psychology major was a very helpful counterpoint to my own training in cultural anthropology. This became especially apparent as we started writing...
up the results of our study, and realized that the outcomes research may be more clearly presented within the analytical framework used in psychology.

Joanne also helped with the research process by conducting telephone interviews with girls, parents and guardians. Her sensitivity and initiative with this work was impressive. Apart from providing much needed assistance with these research tasks, through our discussions of the interviews, she also helped me to see the experience of residential treatment from the adolescent girls’ point of view.

Overall, Joanne became someone I trusted to do good work, speak her own mind, and both give and receive feedback in a constructive, friendly manner. Needless to say, I enjoyed working with her very much!