I spent ten weeks at the Law Students for Reproductive Justice (which I will refer to as LSRJ)’s national office in Oakland, CA. LSRJ mobilizes law students and new lawyers to continue their reproductive justice activism by providing over 100 chapters across the country with resources, event planning toolkits, and fellowship opportunities. I was the only undergraduate intern and joined two legal interns for the summer. My supervisor, Keely Monroe, provided a wide range of projects and tasks for me to complete -- some were clerical, some were research-based, and others focused on communications skills.

My first task was to update the resource guide for LSRJ chapter leaders. I researched relevant books, films, TV shows, and news articles, which related to different reproductive justice issues. Because I was free to include whatever I found missing, I focused more on including media relating to queer RJ issues and the criminalization of pregnancy, two aspects of reproductive justice that I find often go ignored. The updated resource guides go up on the LSRJ website for anyone to use and access. I also updated the Internship and Fellowship Guide, which provides LSRJ chapter members with a list of reproductive justice organizations seeking legal intern positions. I had to email and call around eighty organizations to make sure LSRJ was accurately reflecting their mission statement and description of the intern positions. This meant that I needed to develop a script for calling organizations and had to learn the etiquette of phone conversations in the nonprofit world. As a bit of an introvert, this task proved to be challenging, but I feel like my speaking skills improved because of it. I also searched Facebook for active LSRJ chapter Facebook pages, and recorded what I found in a spreadsheet. This will help Keely as she figures out new strategies to connect LSRJ chapters from year to year.

The other large administrative project I completed was transferring data about law schools to a cloud database called Salesforce. I had to go to all 209 U.S / Puerto Rico law schools’ websites to find out information about their career development
offices, and put all of that data into a spreadsheet, as well as Salesforce. While the project was not the most interesting, it laid the foundation for LSRJ to move all of its records to Salesforce. The LSRJ national office only has four full time staff members, and so when interns nearly double that number, I understand that we are here to help with some of the less fascinating aspects of running a non-profit.

I helped develop memos and one-page fact sheets that were more substantive projects. The first I created was a fact sheet intended for folks interested in LSRJ that are not necessarily law students - including undergraduates, grad students, and even high schoolers. It was an intro to LSRJ and ways to be involved in the org, and reproductive justice activism in general, without being a law student. Additionally I created a list of guidelines to make the most out of a mentee and mentor relationship. Keely assigned both of these tasks to me based on my past experience as an undergrad student as well as having been involved in mentorship programs at Smith. The formatting and content of both of these fact sheets were entirely my own, so it was a chance to learn how to develop a product from scratch.

I also assigned myself a research memo about the intersections of reproductive justice and disability justice. I found sources that LSRJ members could use in order to be inclusive and create intentional spaces with disability in mind, as well as introduce members to the connections and issues between RJ and disability. This was my first experience writing a research memo so I appreciated the opportunity to do when I asked for it. While the internship did not directly offer me this opportunity, it was through this research that I helped discover more about the disability justice community and how it relates to reproductive justice.

The LSRJ national office creates and updates several themed "event toolkits" for chapter leaders. These contain every resource that a chapter needs to put on a successful event on a law school campus. For example, we have an event toolkit on "Abortion Providers as Human Rights Defenders" which includes a film to screen, sample invitation letters for guest speakers, and posters to advertise. The two legal interns and myself developed our own event toolkit, which focused on the criminalization of pregnant women and the shackling of women in labor in the prison system. I helped to create the front matter that introduced the two topics as a reproductive justice issue, and explained the different components included in the toolkit. We created a trivia icebreaker, guidelines and sample questions for a discussion roundtable, and a sample invitation letter for guest speakers. This collaborative effort definitely helped me figure out how to negotiate and compromise on my own ideas to create a final product as a group. There were points where I felt strong disagreement with my co-interns, but we all remained respectful.

As an office, we flew to Washington D.C. to facilitate LSRJ's annual Leadership Institute for its chapter leaders. There, I served as the point-person for several workshops, helped with general set-up and break-down of the conference, and gave a presentation to the attendees. Here was an opportunity for me to be an organization representative and also network/interact with several folks at once. I feel like my presentation skills greatly increased with the guidance and practice Keely gave me in the weeks leading up to the Leadership Institute. This was one of the highlights of my
internship experience because I got to travel as an office and become close to my co-workers. One of the more challenging aspects of the summer was overcoming the silent work culture of the LSRJ office. Because the staff is so small, folks frequently work from home, and each person is supremely busy, there was often a stifling quiet in the office. Also, a lot of people didn't take a lunch, or never left their desks, so for the first few weeks I felt uncomfortable doing so myself. However, the trip to D.C. very much changed my apprehension around the office, and I felt like we all became more comfortable with each other.

The LSRJ staff also included me in several networking lunches, and always let me know about local opportunities such as lectures, talks, and networking events. LSRJ helped host a summer webinar series for CLE (Continuing Legal Education) credit around reproductive justice issues. One of my jobs was to think of questions to ask the webinar presenters in case everyone else was silent. Similarly, when we attended RJ events as an office, I would come with questions pre-prepared in case no one was speaking up. I very much appreciated the opportunities the internship gave me to see the work of other great RJ orgs such as NAPAWF and URGE. We also took part in the All Above All campaign, which is raising awareness about repealing abortion restrictions. With All Above All, I had the opportunity to speak on behalf of LSRJ at two rallies - one in Oakland, and one in San Francisco. Again, my public speaking skills were tested and improved by this exciting experience.

Another favorite part of my internship was engaging with social media advocacy. I helped manage LSRJ's Twitter and Facebook feeds, which let me see what other organizations were paying attention to. I also got to be a guest blogger on LSRJ's blog, called "Repo Repro." I was allowed to blog about whatever reproductive justice issues piqued my interest. I definitely feel like I developed my own blogging voice, which is becoming more and more important in the reproductive justice field.

Throughout the internship, I feel like I developed a lot of social skills that you need in non-profit work: for example, being able to articulate your ideas clearly, putting on your organization's "hat" and representing that organization, and being patient with people who may not understand your point of view. I also learned about effective ways to message around sensitive topics such as abortion and drug addiction while pregnant. I had to deal with trolls and other unpleasant online presences as I handled the social media portions of my internship. While this wasn't always what I looked forward to, I learned how and when to limit my emotional response to people clearly commenting on things to cause turmoil. As I had said earlier, I also used my collaborative skills. I was spending time with people from very different backgrounds than I, and we had to figure out the best way to move forward in the face of difference, which is essential to coalition work in general.

As a Study of Women and Gender major, I feel like several of my courses contributed to my success at this internship. I tend to focus on reproductive justice issues in my coursework, so having a base knowledge of reproductive justice's history. My recollection that reproductive justice is based in the idea of a coalition-based, broader framework, proved to be incredibly helpful in my brainstorming for topics for the event toolkit and my blogging work. I am also considering law school, so LSRJ was a
logical place for me to be. I had the chance to speak with current lawyers as well as several current law students, which helped re-shape my perspective on the use of the law as a tool to achieve reproductive justice.

I do acknowledge that this internship provided me with incredibly important skills and opportunities to learn more about the reproductive justice field in general. If another RRASC intern is to be placed here, though, I would recommend that they have some interest in the law and/or law school. My experience was positive because I do find legal aspects of RJ work interesting, but for someone who does not, it could possibly be unbearable. I think that while I was indeed helpful to the LSRJ office, I'm not sure it's the best place for an undergrad intern to work. The only times my voice was really necessary was when I was creating the two fact sheets, which were projects purposefully created for me to complete. It makes sense that a law school chapter organization is geared towards law students, but because of that, some of the material felt irrelevant or inaccessible for me as an undergraduate. Additionally, while of course LSRJ is a reproductive justice organization, a lot of time it doesn't seem like we are directly in the middle of any activism. LSRJ is more like a "secondary" organization; by that, I mean LSRJ is helping make the people who will eventually make the change. I was hoping for a more involved summer, rather than sitting back and listening to all of the work other people/organizations were doing. All in all, though, I found this summer internship a great time and LSRJ to be a great organization.

More information on the RRASC internship program: clpp.hampshire.edu/RRASC