This summer I spent 10 weeks working at Tewa Women United (TWU) in Espanola, New Mexico. When I arrived there were many projects for me to begin work on. Because of the size of the organization and of the programs, as well as the structure, it became clear that I would not just be working in the reproductive justice program, but also in the Women's Health Initiatives program and the Environmental Justice program as well.

Throughout the summer I worked on a lot of transcribing projects of interviews that have been recorded over the last few years. I also did a lot of economic development, climate and health research specific to the community. With this information, I wrote multiple position papers for the organization. While these were projects that the organization needed to strengthen their programming as well as increase general community knowledge, I also got to participate larger projects. This included participating in the planning of a solar education and installation project for local women living on the pueblo.

This work brought me into contact with local renewable energy contractors, the Santa Clara tribal housing commission as well as women who were interested in learning and participating in the workshop. I also attended health fairs and conferences all over the state, tabling for TWU and meeting people from across the state who were interested in our work. This occasionally included me offering a workshop for participants at a conference, on topics such as what you need to know and how to talk about sex. I also worked with Concerned Citizens for Nuclear Safety and Think Outside The Bomb, both national organizations located in the area, as a representative of TWU and assist in disarmament work that is being done here, which has a direct impact on the local community.

While I was busy in the day-to-day, most times I was not overburdened with work. My largest individual project was creating a community-based participatory research project which will be going on throughout the year. This project will keep me connected to the organization and the greater
community through research that will be part of my undergraduate senior thesis. While this is greatly beyond the scope of the internship, my experiences and the connections I made have made such an endeavor both possible as well as tremendously rewarding.

Some of the reasons this internship was so rewarding in so many ways was because I used skills that I often do not have to apply in the ways that I did, and often skills I didn't even know I had or would need to possess. Many of these skills were things like being tremendously flexible in the day to day, accepting the pace of office life and moving in synch, being resourceful, couching my own judgments, not challenging every issue that I saw problematic both in the office as well as in the community and learning how to be a good listener without needing to respond. I also had to set aside all of my judgment and preconceived notions and relearn them from the point of view of the Northern New Mexico Tribal community. By asking questions and listening closely as well as paying close attention to the nuances of the situations I was in, I learned quickly how to be a cultural ambassador which served me and my organization well. The key to my success in this internship was my honest drive to learn everything I could about the culture, the natural history, the impacts on the community, the local politics and the unique aspects of the social relationships and pressures that were present in the day to day lives of people in the community.

This of course was not easy. While I attribute my general success this summer to hardwork, perseverance and a certain amount of sheer luck, the fact that I fit relatively well into this homogenous community and did not make waves upon my arrival helped me to assimilate into both the workplace and the community at large. This was a constant challenge because while I would not go back and change anything, I often felt like I was being dishonest about my heritage and history by allowing the community to see me how they wanted to instead of challenging their assumptions about my race and class. While I do believe my silence helped me to succeed it did not always feel honest, which was a constant challenge.

While struggling with these issues of inclusion I was also challenged by the lack of supervision.
While Michelle, my direct supervisor, is an incredible woman, she not only had a large family to take care of but was in the process of transitioning out of the office. This left little time or space for me to receive any guidance or help, which left me without a very solid support system in the office. While I made a lot happen, having consistent help and support would have been beneficial. It turned out that if I ever really wanted or needed her help I had to travel to her home so that she could help which presented other challenges as well. With a little more guidance and support I feel that my experience would have been greatly improved.

While I dealt with these challenges on the day-to-day, I also encountered a lot of positive feedback and small successes, which were rewarding. Many of these smaller successes are the highlights from my summer. A few include the big summer encampment that I helped to plan and build, my work with the young women's RJ group and developing a curriculum, visiting people in their own communities and homes as well as hearing all the stories that people shared with me. Overall throughout the summer I spent as much time as I could outside, one of the most special parts of this internship for me was the incredible location. I fell dearly in love with the desert, the land and the mountains in Northern New Mexico. I had never been to the Southwest before so the whole experience was an incredible adventure.

Throughout my summer I used every skill that I have ever developed in the field of flexibility. I had to be incredibly self-sufficient and bold in asking for help or getting any answers about questions I had. The most important part of this job for me tested not only my resourcefulness, but also my ability to forge connections and reach out and network with people in greater Northern New Mexico. While I did a lot of these things well, I spent so much time orienting and learning about my community and surroundings, as well as frustrated by the general organization within the non-profit I did not actually physically accomplish all of the work I had set out to. I often struggled to find the information I needed to complete some of the materials I was working on. This meant that everything took a lot longer to accomplish, and the pace of life and work in New Mexico is drastically different from any of my
experiences working in New England offices - including the concept of working 9-5, Monday through Friday.

While my previous experiences were really important for my success at this job, so was my ability to let a lot of what I had learned fall on the back burner and relearn a lot of things, especially regarding social structures and office/community norms. My academics allowed me to offer a skill that many of the people in the office and community do not have, which was three years of post-secondary education. This allowed for me to create academic documents that the organization needed, but could not produce internally. These skills were critical to what I offered the organization and the community at large.

This internship has also allowed for continued work with the organization. When I arrived at TWU one of the things that people mentioned wanting to happen was a community health survey. Because of this request, my involvement with the organization is ongoing because in the coming year I will be working with the organization to implement a community-based participatory research survey exploring the environmental impacts on women's reproductive health who live on the Pueblo in Northern New Mexico. I look forward to my continued involvement with this organization and would like it to continue even after I graduate from Hampshire College.

While I can say that I had a spectacular time, and this internship was an incredible experience, it isn't for everyone. It is important to realize that this can be a tremendously isolating experience and a situation with extremely different race, class and gender politics than I, or most folks have ever experienced. Also I had almost no supervision or guidance, which does not work for everyone. You should also be a generally flexible and unflappable person. You will be exposed to a lot of different situations which you may, or may not have ever encountered and it is important to be able to not only adapt quickly but do it with grace and poise. Do not go into this internship expecting it to be the most academically productive or challenging experience, and know that you will be challenged in other ways, more than you ever thought possible. This is not a traditional office set-up and you will not be
given an office or a cubicle. You must carve out you own space in the office as well as be able to work
with general chaos. The office is a family friendly workspace, which means at any given time there
can be upwards of 10 children under the age of 5 or so in the office, which can be incredibly distracting
as well as fun. This job also required a lot of driving and general transportation needs, so if you plan
on doing this internship you must own and be willing to use a car and use it a lot. Also if you have
really strong food politics, go prepared to not only set those politics aside, but check your assumptions
and be willing to adjust your expectations.

Something that surprised me, was how involved I got in issues of environmental justice and
how quickly they became social justice, reproductive justice, economic justice, race, class and
gendered issues. This internship gives you many opportunities to explore reproductive justice through
many different lenses and focuses primarily on the impacts of Los Alamos National Labs on the greater
Native American and Chicano communities in the area. Also, be ready to explore sides of issues that
you would have never considered or thought about, such as the importance of honor, family pride and
legacy in these communities.

Overall, I had an amazing experience, that challenged me in so many new and unexpected ways
and I have tons of advice for anyone who is thinking about wanting to go to New Mexico and work
with Tewa Women United, but I do not know how to put it onto paper, so I will end by saying if you
are interested in this internship be sure to contact me at msw07@hampshire.edu.