I worked for Ibis Reproductive Health this summer through the RRASC program, and I am super grateful to have had such an enlightening experience and to have met such an amazing group of people. Ibis is an organization that focuses on conducting rigorous research focused on women’s autonomy and access. They try to fill in the gaps of knowledge missing in that research field, so their work is highly innovative. Their staff consists of brilliant people who seem like they are passionate about their job, but know how to enjoy themselves outside of the office and can speak on a plethora of topics outside of their work. While at Ibis, I gained a lot of occupational, research, and life skills, and I’m truly privileged for this opportunity given to me by RRASC. In the subsequent paragraphs, I’ll highlight some of the main projects I contributed to, the skills I gained, and the lessons I learned.

During my time at Ibis, I mostly worked on writing a section of research brief that I contributed to for the All* Above All campaign to end the Hyde Amendment. Like the other writing projects I had at Ibis, I had to remain as objective as possible, while defending women against policies and society. The main difference with the research brief is that it takes a lot of—well—research before I could actually start. So a majority of my time was spent reading other articles, abstracting data, organizing them on a spreadsheet and making tables to refer back to. It seemed tedious at first, but after doing all of that, the writing part seemed like a piece of cake. Maybe I should swipe that strategy for when I need to write essays in school. It is sort of like brainstorming, only much more systematic, rigorous, and organized.
**Military women**

I was also involved in the ongoing research of military women and abortion. I read some background information on the project and some interviews. I also revised code summaries of research on military women and their access to contraceptive and abortions, meaning I edited sections of the research draft for things like consistency and grammar. Unexpectedly, I learned a lot about military rankings through the revisions and research process. I also completed a quality assurance for an interview. Finally with this project, I created a data table that will be used in the final published piece. I accomplished this by looking through each participant’s survey to abstract necessary data like rank, age, or gender, for example. Sometimes, I didn’t need to go through that process because there was already a spreadsheet with demographic data. However, because participants were being added as I was creating the table, I would need to revise my additions frequently. I’ve created tables before, but to make it an Ibis table, I had to use previous research to guide me as well as existing data on the military population to compare our sample to.

**Commute**

As for working in the city, the commute was eek! I still lived in Massachusetts, so I wasn’t too far from home like some RRASCs were, but I still had a total of 4 hours of commuting. The plus side was that I had leisure time to read some books, listen to some podcasts, or just sleep (I essentially traveled to both ends anyways, so why not?!).
Alaska Telemedicine

I was very excited to be engaged in a new study on telemedicine in Alaska. It started as soon as participants start responding, and it could take as long as the grant expires. My role was to send incentives to the participants and role play as a participant for the interview practice runs. I’m looking forward to seeing the results of the project.

Whole Woman's Health v. Hellerstedt.

I also learned how to build a website. Sure, I learned how to do that back in high school, but this experience allowed me to put into practice old and new skills to update the Later Abortion website. Twice-weekly, I would cruise through the inter-web for articles with topics related to later abortion, stigma, and effects on women and practitioners. I came to realize how conservative media coverage is on later abortion because I would sift through a disproportionally large amount of news articles justifying the right of the fetus life over the mother’s. Through the website project, I also learned a lot more about the Supreme Court case of Whole Woman's Health v. Hellerstedt. Whole Woman’s Health contested against the House Bill 2 law that Texas legislated in 2013 that required clinics to follow ambulatory surgical centers and that abortion providers have admitting privileges to nearby hospitals. At around 10:30 on June 27th, the entire office gathered in front of two tiny laptops awaiting the decisions on twitter and SCOTUS blog. Once the decision was read out by the person closest to the screen, most of us screamed in jubilee, while others warned that they would cry.

Later that day, at about 12, a few of us got on a conference call to hear what some people, including Amy Hagstrom Miller, the director of WWH, had to say about the ruling and its impact. It was a surreal moment! I was elated about the significance of this case, and I was really
proud of my organization for making a difference in the case by providing some of the research used by the plaintiff. Although I didn’t work on the project with them, that didn’t stop me from raving about it to my friends (or maybe everyone I sat on my commutes with) and feeling extremely excited to be working in an honestly, very cool organization.

**Opening a Dialogue**

However, what did stand out was how limited the conversation about the horrific incidents that were happening over the summer. I didn’t really hear anyone talk about it, which saddened me more. It was as if it was this vibrant elephant in our small office that everyone wanted to tiptoe around it. I brought up the issue to my supervisor after the shootings of Alton Sterling, Philando Castille, and the five police officers in Dallas. Unfortunately since then, more shootings and incidences have occurred. We talked with the communications chair. We talked with the president. And finally we talked with the rest of the office, at Cambridge and globally. At the meeting with the office, people shared personal anecdotes of the shooting’s impact on them. Others talked about the work environment not feeling like a community. But we all resonated that there was something wrong with the way things were and things must change. People were extremely supportive and seem interested in wanting change brought into the office. There’s even a conversation of how or if we want this to orient Ibis, for example, if Ibis is/is going to be a reproductive justice organization. There’s also a conversation of using a social conscious theory lens to review steps from our research methods to our enrollment process. The Oakland office suggested that we could arrange task forces to ensure these goals were met. My office suggested having monthly meetings to improve bonding and community. I’m looking forward to what Ibis can do to improve with its internal communication, and I am hopeful and
optimistic for the future of Ibis.

**Life After Ibis**

Interning at Ibis, although it was a tremendous experience, has not redirected my aspiration of becoming an OB/GYN; instead it has refocused it. Spending half my summer reading anecdotes from patients and researchers and perusing through data supporting the need for more reproductive access and women’s autonomy, I’ve realized the value of having more OB/GYNs provide abortion services to women or know how to direct women to practitioners who can. There are a lack of practitioners who know how to conduct abortions and many doctors don’t have reliable resources to provide women for who they can contact.

I’ve also integrated the research aspect into my daily life. I often read pub-med now, just for the fun of it, to dig deeper into current knowledge or explore new findings. Even the mundane things like emailing and group meetings have helped me outside of the Ibis environment because now I can send more professional emails and conduct meetings with staff members because I emulated those skills from the staff members around me.

In addition to reading more research, I’m actually conducting research now. This academic year, I work as the Secretary of Diversity of the Student Government Association of UMASS Amherst. My main goals for the year are to TALK, ACCESS, AND LEARN. This involves interacting with groups or programs on campus. One specific thing I'd like to accomplish is to survey Registered Student Organization members to get a feel of how inclusive the group is, the history of diversity, or the lack of it, Essentially, I want the surveys to create a benchmark that demonstrates level of diversity, inclusion, access, equity, and awareness so that I can know better how to implement strategies for those groups. Reading through lots of research
methods section has prepared me for this task because it has familiarized me with the type of questions to ask and the process of it all. It has truly surprised me how easy working at Ibis has influenced me in things outside of reproductive research.