

Over the course of the 2013-2014 academic year, I have had the opportunity to serve as a research assistant alongside Professor Mary Brinton on her research project, which focuses on gender equity and low-fertility rates in postindustrial countries. Working with Professor Brinton has truly been one of the most rewarding experiences I have had here at Harvard. As a research assistant I have had the opportunity to conduct qualitative analysis of collected data, work on preliminary coding, and provide constructive input on the theoretical framework of the project, amongst other things. As part of a research team, I meet on a weekly basis with Professor Brinton at the Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study, along with seven other undergraduates, to track our progress and discuss our findings. Initially, I was quite hesitant about working as a research assistant. I had no previous research experience, and the idea of working with a Harvard professor was fairly intimidating. Nevertheless, I decided to submit an application and soon received an invitation to work on the project. Upon meeting Professor Brinton I was pleasantly surprised at her level of approachability. Discussing the project over tea in Radcliffe Yard at one of our very first meetings certainly set the precedent for a welcoming atmosphere. Early on in my sophomore year I was introduced to the whole-hearted and nurturing environment set forth by the sociology department as a whole.

Working as a research assistant has provided me with an invaluable experience unlike any other. I have gained insight into the various research methods utilized within the field of sociology, acquired skills that can be applicable to my own research in the future, and have been mentored by an experienced faculty member in her respective field. Joining the project at the beginning of my sophomore year only affirmed my desire to pursue a concentration in sociology. Prior to joining the project, I had yet to select a concentration. As the semester progressed I came to the realization that I was much more engaged with the work I was doing with Professor Brinton than I was with my other academic endeavors. Serving as a research assistant allowed me to genuinely discover my ultimate interest in the field of sociology. In addition, working on the project has solidified my intent to pursue a senior thesis in the near future. Being exposed to the research process within the field has led me to aspire to conduct my own independent research in the coming years. I have had a gratifying experience working as a research assistant under Professor Mary Brinton, and encourage others to search for similar opportunities.