This report lays out the purpose and accomplishments of the sabbatical granted to me during the Spring, 2016 semester.

I. Purpose of sabbatical

Over the past few decades, social science research has shed light on how parents and other central caregivers, in their interactions with young children, often unwittingly perpetuate gender inequity and gender-based disempowerment. The purpose of this sabbatical was to draw on this recent social science presenting clear paths toward empowerment-based parenting practices.

II. Accomplishments of sabbatical

A. The majority of this sabbatical was spent researching and writing chapters for this book, *The Empowered Child*. Despite a few minor obstacles along the way that delayed some of the initial progress, substantial movement was made. Unfortunately, after four months of work, and in consultation with a colleague working in a similar field, it became clear that someone else’s book, nearing publication (to be released in January 2017), had significant overlap with mine. In it, there are several chapters with identical content to my manuscript’s chapters (e.g., Chapter 4: “You’re so beautiful” and other evaluations with hidden dangers, on the negative impact of appearance-based compliments; Chapter 5: “Give me a hug goodbye, sweetie” regarding the disempowerment in making young children give affection to others; and Chapter 6: “It’s okay, don’t cry!” focused on the invalidation of feelings and teaching of emotional dishonesty). Having the concept for the manuscript almost entirely scooped and their book far further along, I ultimately came to the very disheartening decision to (mostly) relinquish the project.

I redirected my efforts to work on a manuscript that was much overdue for analyzing the data and writing (now, in press—see B, below). However, I wasn’t able to entirely abandon the work of empowerment-based parenting education— I adapted my writing into presentation material and offered educational workshops. These workshops focused almost exclusively on the tendency for adults to employ a male referent as the default (including in reference to the vast majority of inanimate objects) and its implications in the development of mental health (e.g., esteem, sense of importance, empowerment) among children of different genders. The workshops were presented to both early childhood educators as well as parents, at The Children’s School, SSU and Arts in the Garden, another local preschool. Because of their
reception, as well as the obvious need (i.e., adults who consistently utilized the male as default during experiential activities during the workshop, despite knowing the topic), I intend to continue offering them. Additionally, as I prepare my classes for the upcoming semester, I’m translating much of this material, from my workshops and writing, into counseling-specific practices to use in my teaching.

B. Despite the disappointment of having to forfeit my book idea, I transferred my efforts during the remainder of the sabbatical to a manuscript from my research on sexual minority (LGB) youth. In collaboration with colleagues, I completed, submitted, and published the article (currently in press), Predictors of sexual minority youth’s reported suicide attempts and mental health in the Journal of Homosexuality. Of note, The Huffington Post made mention of our study, here:
http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/losing-friends-coming-out_us_5773fb37e4b0d1f85d4807ab

C. As I look to the future, I find myself beginning to bridge my research on the mental health of/empowerment-based, feminist psychotherapy with oppressed groups of people with the overarching task of shaping a professional training program as well as the mental health profession at large. Two recent proposals, Raising counseling students’ awareness of the clinical impact of inequality and Navigating the legislative backlash: The training implications of the so-called “religious freedom” and other discriminatory legislation, both of which address the critical need to make these larger sociopolitical links to our work as mental health educators, were accepted at the 2017 National Multicultural Summit.