Human Services Practicum

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Message to Students

You have reached an exciting milestone in your human services education–beginning your fieldwork! Internships often bring both feelings of enthusiasm as well as feelings of trepidation. We are excited to accompany you as you begin your professional journey.

As a human services professional of over twenty years, my early fieldwork days are long gone but definitely not forgotten. My internships provided me with some of the strongest lessons I learned in my career and influenced my work as a social worker and as an instructor. I am passionate about preparing students adequately to do this work as well as supporting students as they gain experience and confidence. I have kept a list in my head of all of the "We should really be talking to students about…" topics that I feel are important to discuss as students are developing their professional identity. The result of that list is this book. We developed this text as an Open Educational Resource (OER) with the belief that expensive textbooks represent a critical barrier to students. Also, current textbooks tend to get outdated quickly, and with this format, we can continuously update materials as needed. We are happy to share our resources with others and as an open text other instructors can adapt our materials as needed for their courses.

The guiding principle for this text was to keep issues of equity front and center. We have not confined discussions of diversity, equity, and inclusion to just one chapter, although we do have a chapter focused solely on working across differences. We hope you find that discussions of equity form an important part of each and every chapter as we discuss the issues of equity and inclusion inherent in the chapter's topic.

We have also included activities at the end of each chapter to help you reflect on your learning and incorporate the material into your professional experience. The activities include journal prompts, self-care activities, class discussion questions, and reflection assignments. We hope you find these useful to help you navigate the topics throughout the text.

It is important to note that this text is still a work in progress, and we want your feedback! If you notice errors or omissions in the content, please share your impressions. We believe students are a valuable source of critical feedback as we work to create inclusive and equitable materials.

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About this Book

Accessibility Statement

This book was created in good faith to ensure that it will meet accessibility standards wherever possible, and to highlight areas where we know there is work to do. It is our hope that by being transparent in this way, we can begin the process of making sure accessibility is top of mind for all authors, adopters, students, and contributors of all kinds on open textbook projects.

If you encounter an accessibility issue, please let your instructor know right away.

Equity Lens

The Open Oregon Educational Resources Targeted Pathways Project seeks to dismantle structures of power and oppression entrenched in barriers to course material access. We provide tools and resources to make diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) primary considerations when faculty choose, adapt, and create course materials. In promoting DEI, our project is committed to:

1. Ensuring diversity of representation within our team and the materials we distribute
2. Publishing materials that use accessible, clear language for our target audience
3. Sharing course materials that directly address and interrogate systems of oppression, equipping students and educators with the knowledge to do the same

Designing and piloting openly licensed, intersectional, and antiracist course materials is one starting point among many when addressing inequities in higher education. Our project invites students and educators to engage with us in this work, and we value spaces where learning communities can grow and engage together.

We welcome being held accountable to this statement and will respond to feedback submitted via **our contact page**.

Course Learning Outcomes

Educators, students, and future employers all benefit when course-level learning outcomes guide our shared work. When course-level learning outcomes are public, institutions demonstrate a commitment to equitable student success through the potential for increased collaboration and inclusive course design. This project analyzed learning outcomes across the State of Oregon to identify themes and commonalities. Authors used this analysis as a basis for developing course outcomes that could match the curriculum of multiple institutions in Oregon while still considering their local needs and context.

Course Learning Outcomes

1. Identify 2–4 appropriate placement sites for a human services practicum.
2. Demonstrate the professional standards, laws, and codes of conduct guiding human services practice.

3. Discuss the purpose and value of supervision in human service work.
4. Summarize cross-cultural issues in the workplace.
5. Compare and contrast the typical stages of an internship experience.
6. Create sample learning objectives for a CWE learning agreement.

Teaching and Learning Approach

The authors of this book embraced an equity-minded design for structure, scope, and sequence of chapters and chapter content. They sought to honor the needs and experiences of students who are often underserved in higher education in Oregon. Authors considered Transparency in Teaching and Learning (TILT), Universal Design for Learning (UDL), and Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT) to design meaningful learning pathways for you. You will find rich images and multimedia in addition to written content. You will also find provocative discussion questions that align with learning outcomes and objectives.

Instructors, please see the Instructor Resources section in the Back Matter for an overview of curriculum design as well as openly licensed course packs and teaching tools.

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Preparing For Your Internship

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1.1 Chapter Overview

In this chapter, we give an overview of **fieldwork** in human services—the how and the why. Fieldwork is a key component of any human services program, whether at the associate, bachelor's, or master's level. Fieldwork allows you to apply your knowledge in real-life situations, where you can solidify your understanding of the coursework.

After reading this chapter, you will be able to do the following:
- Articulate the importance of fieldwork in human services education.
- Identify the national standards related to fieldwork education.
- Examine your challenges in beginning an **internship** experience.

PREVIEW OF KEY TERMS

- Apprenticeship: A formal type of experiential learning usually ending in an examination and a specific credential or acknowledgment as a professional in the field.
- CSHSE Standards: The Council on Standards in Human Services Education is the accrediting body for post-secondary human services programs that provides guidelines (standards) for programs across the United States.
- Diversity: The practice or quality of including or involving people from a range of different social and ethnic backgrounds and of different genders, sexual orientations, etc., that may or may not intersect.
- Equity: The quality of being fair and impartial and providing equitable access to different perspectives and resources to all students.
- Equity lens: A way of looking at and acting on issues of justice to ensure that outcomes in the conditions of well-being are improved for marginalized groups, lifting outcomes for all.
- Fieldwork (or internship/practicum): Experiential learning contained within human services programs. For the purposes of this text, *fieldwork*, *internship*, and *practicum* will be used interchangeably.
- Inclusion: The practice or quality of providing equal access to opportunities and resources for people who might otherwise systemically be excluded or marginalized, such as those who have physical or mental disabilities and members of other minority groups.
- Internship: A credit class in which students apply theory to practice by using what you have learned in coursework in a real-world setting with a supervisor/mentor who is invested in your growth and development (often also referred to as fieldwork or practicum).
- Social work: A practice-based profession and an academic discipline that promotes social change and development, social cohesion, and the empowerment and liberation of people.
- Sociology: The study of social life, social change, and the social causes and consequences of human behavior.
- Theory to practice: The opportunity to apply concepts learned through formal coursework to real-life practice settings.

Chapter Overview Licenses and Attributions

1.2 Human Services as an Applied Science

An **internship** is supervised practical training intended to be a positive experience to prepare you for a professional career in human services. It is an opportunity for you to learn new skills and often includes becoming aware of potential mistakes you might make in the workplace setting without being completely responsible for them. Human services is an applied science, meaning that students not only get the background theory and knowledge but also learn skills needed for the profession *and* get the opportunity to demonstrate those skills.

One goal of an internship is to explore real-world professional possibilities while learning about them. In other words, the primary goal of an internship is to learn about and experience the duties of the profession in a specific environment, hopefully one that interests you as a potential professional. Keep in mind that although the internship can feel like a job with big responsibilities, it is also intended to be a rewarding experience that will help prepare you for a successful career in the future (figure 1.1). The instructor and the agency staff typically want you to do well, and they are usually happy to help make that happen.

Figure 1.1 An internship gives you insight into what it looks like to help others in a professional and effective manner.

Sociology, Social Work, and Human Services

Students are often confused about what the difference is between the fields of **sociology**, **social work**, and human services (or, indeed, about whether there *is* any difference). The main differences between the fields have to do with the intention of the coursework and the specificity of the subject matter covered.

The American Sociological Association (2014) defines sociology as "the study of social life, social change, and the social causes and consequences of human behavior." Sociology focuses on how humans interact in groups and organizations, including personal groups as well as the groups formed by different societies. Sociology studies society from an academic and/or research point of view. The field focuses on understanding the root causes of human social behavior and identifying

theories to explain it. It is not necessarily focused on how to change behavior at the societal level.

According to the International Federation of Social Workers (2014), social work is a "practice-based profession and an academic discipline that promotes social change and development, social cohesion, and the empowerment and liberation of people." Social work is based on the values of social justice and respect for **diversity**. Theories from social sciences, humanities, and Indigenous knowledge guide social workers. Beyond theory, social work also involves engaging people to address life challenges and quality of life.

Social work focuses on understanding and changing social behavior. The definition of social work as a practice-based field necessarily includes creating change underpinned by social justice and human rights values. This focus on creating change is what separates social work and sociology.

Human services contains a much more diverse area of academic study. The National Organization for Human Services (n.d.) defines the field of human services as "broadly defined, uniquely approaching the objective of meeting human needs through an interdisciplinary knowledge base, focusing on prevention as well as remediation of problems, and maintaining a commitment to improving the overall quality of life of service populations." Human services looks at populations and the systems and services that support them. The human services profession seeks to improve accessibility, accountability, and coordination among professionals and agencies.

Under this definition, human services can contain many different areas of study and many different careers, including social work, criminal justice, substance use treatment, rehabilitation, community mental health, and services to older adults, just to name a few (figure 1.2).
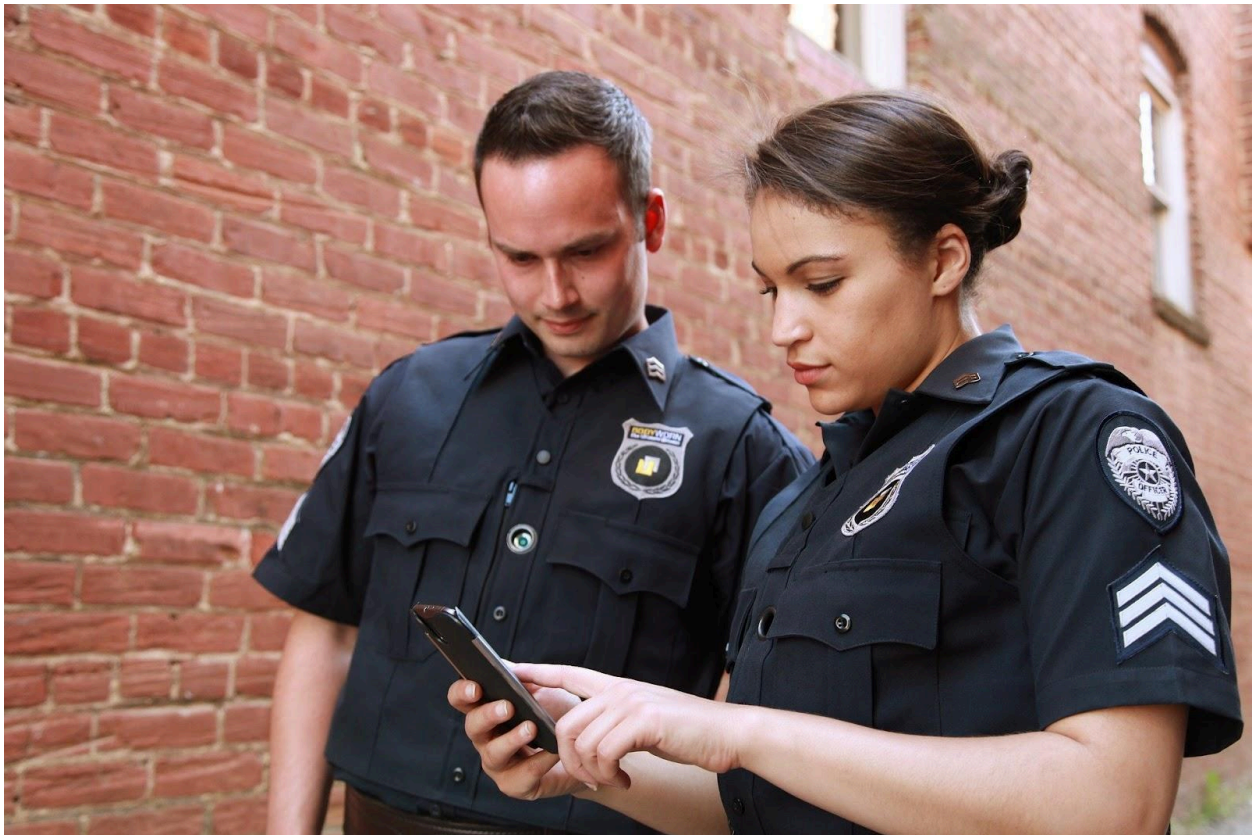
Figure 1.2. Human services includes many different careers, including criminal justice.

The Role of Fieldwork in Professional Helping

Internships today have their historical roots in apprenticeships. Apprenticeships are teaching and learning relationships in which the student learns an art, trade, or job from a skilled professional. This type of learning process usually takes many years. It begins with a selection process, which might require you to have a certain ability or grade point average. It involves finding someone to guide you through the learning process (e.g., an experienced craftsman or instructor). The **apprenticeship** often concludes with some sort of final examination that ends in graduation and the apprentice's recognition as a professional. Teaching relationships are often mutually beneficial. Most people like to share their expertise with others, and teaching often teaches the teacher as well as the student.

Supervision is at the heart of **fieldwork**. In this sense, fieldwork is like an apprenticeship, although you are likely to continue to have supervisors if you pursue a graduate degree or license. Learning how supervisors interact with coworkers and clients gives you an opportunity to observe and even model similar behaviors as you start to turn theory into practice. Supervisory insight, experience, and involvement with your education will help you develop a sense of what it means to be a professional in your field as well.

Occasionally, a supervisor can also become a mentor, which is a special type of teaching-learning relationship and can have a positive impact on your career. Most times, a supervisor will schedule individual time with an intern to go over the student's duties, clients, and caseloads. However, sometimes supervisors are too busy to give interns as much direct supervision as interns would like. While this can be disappointing, it might be helpful to remember that supervisors usually sacrifice productive work time and space to make room for interns. So even if your supervisor does not seem to meet your expectations at first, that does not mean they do not care or that you cannot improve the situation. Similarly, not all supervisors have the same style or approach, so be prepared to be as flexible and realistic with your expectations as possible. See **Chapter 6** for more on supervision.

Students (and sometimes supervisors) often ask how an internship, fieldwork, practicum, cooperative work experience, and apprenticeship differ. We discussed the example of apprenticeship above, but the others are similar in scope. The titles of these experiences often depend on factors such as university or college standards, a credentialing body, or even a funding source. For this text, we will use the term *internship* to encompass all types of experiential learning listed above.

Human Services as an Applied Science Licenses and Attributions

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Figure 1.1. **Photo** by **Christina @ wocintechchat.com** is licensed under the **Unsplash License**.

Figure 1.2. **Photo** by **Utility_Inc** is licensed under the **Pixabay License**.

1.3 The Council for Standards in Human Services Education for Fieldwork

Internship experiences in human services programs are guided by the Council for Standards in Human Services Education (CSHSE). The CSHSE was formed to provide guidance and consistency in human services programs across the United States. CSHSE is the accrediting body for human services degree programs, and even programs that

are not accredited try to follow their guidelines for education. You have probably heard the CSHSE referred to in previous courses or texts.

Fieldwork is considered so important for human services education that it comprises its own standard for each of the accredited program levels (associate, bachelor's, and master's). The

CSHSE standards set the expectations for academic programs and their students as to what qualifies as an acceptable field placement. While these standards are aimed at the program directors and faculty, they can help you craft goals for your experience that help you gain the knowledge and experience expected in the field. All of the CSHSE Standards can be found on the **CSHSE website**. The standard for associate programs is listed in the following section.

In Focus: Field Experience

Context: Field experience such as a practicum or internship occurs in a human services setting. Fieldwork provides an environment and context to integrate the knowledge, theory, skills, and professional behaviors that are concurrently being taught in the classroom. It must be an integral part of the education process.

   Standard 20: The program shall provide field experience that is integrated with the curriculum.

1. Provide a brief description of the overall process and structure of the fieldwork learning experience.
2. Provide evidence that one academic credit is awarded for no less than three hours of field experience per week.
3. Demonstrate that students are exposed to human services agencies and clients (assigned visitation, observation, assisting staff, etc.) early in the program.
4. Provide a copy of the current manual and guidelines that are given to students advising them of field placement requirements and policies.
5. Provide **documentation** of written learning agreements with field agencies that specify the student's role, activities, anticipated learning outcomes, supervision, and field instruction. The agreement must be signed by the appropriate agency director, fieldwork supervisor, program instructor, and student.
6. Provide syllabi for required seminars. Seminars must meet no less than every two weeks. Seminar hours must not be included in field experience hours.
7. Provide evidence that required field experience is no less than 250 clock hours.
8. Demonstrate how the field experience provides the student an opportunity to progress from:

    1. Observation to
    2. Directly supervised client contact to
    3. Indirectly supervised client contact.
9. Demonstrate that field supervisors have no less than the same degree the program awards. It is strongly recommended that field supervisors have no less than one level of degree above the level of degree awarded by the program.
10. Demonstrate that the program continually monitors the progress of each student and performs no less than one site visit to each field placement site per quarter or semester. The visit can be held as a direct site visit or with appropriate technology. The technology that is used should ensure that the field placement supervisor and student can be identified (CSHSE, 2020).

For example, these standards clearly address the need for client contact (see section H). You should expect that, over the course of your internship, you will get the chance to work directly with clients. If your agency seems reluctant to allow that, you can use the standards to advocate for the learning you need.

Similar to **social work**, human services by definition includes teaching students how to support and encourage behavior change. The fieldwork gives you an opportunity to demonstrate this knowledge.

The Field Experience Seminar

As indicated earlier, most internships include some sort of classroom experience. The idea here is to combine theory with practice under the guidance of an experienced instructor and to learn how to operate as a member of a team or group. This standard clinical or professional training format is also a good way for the instructor to monitor progress, head off problems, and facilitate your professional development. You can also use the seminar and the CSHSE Standards to ensure you are getting the experience you need at your field site.

Typically, undergraduate or first-time internships provide this level of instruction in a group format. It involves several students going out to their sites during the week and then attending a regular class meeting to review and discuss their experiences with their instructor and fellow interns.

This group format has additional benefits. One of them is to give you the opportunity to learn about or even vicariously experience other internship sites and career possibilities in the field by listening to colleagues describe their experiences. Having interns share experiences in this way reduces the sense of isolation. It's also a chance to offer support since all of you are going through the same learning process but in different settings. These meetings provide support to you during this process and provide an opportunity for you to share experiences and other events encountered during the week.

During group sessions, questions and concerns are addressed by the instructor, which often benefits other members as well. Remember, instructors do not like to be surprised by problems, especially after they occur, so if one seems to be brewing, it is best to discuss it as early as possible. After all, even basic problem-solving skills include knowing that it is easier to deal with minor problems early than after they have become major problems later.

Case Study: Diego and Lisa's Stories

Diego was getting close to graduating with his associate degree. However, he had yet to begin his fieldwork. Diego spoke both English and Spanish but was shy about his English skills. He was so nervous about interviewing that he kept delaying his internship. His instructor, who knew that Diego was very involved in raising his younger siblings, suggested an agency that worked specifically with youth. His comfort in working with adolescents helped his **confidence** in interviewing for an internship. His field supervisor was delighted with Diego's interest. They needed a bilingual mentor, specifically one who was comfortable around younger adolescents. Diego's internship was so successful he was offered a case manager position upon graduation.

Lisa had successfully completed all of her coursework for her associate degree in human services. She had interned in a large child services agency and had managed to assist many caseworkers with information, referrals, and paperwork. She had avoided working directly with clients herself because she did not feel confident in her abilities. She was also completing a gerontology certificate, which required fieldwork as well. Since she had not worked with older adults in her previous agency, she needed another placement for her gerontology certificate. Her instructor chose the site for her and placed her as an activities assistant in an assisted living facility. She knew that Lisa would be forced to have daily contact with residents. Lisa was very fearful at first, but by the end of her placement, she had gained not only excellent experience but confidence in her ability to work successfully with residents. She went on to become the assistant manager of a very busy senior center as well as earn her bachelor of social work at a nearby university.

Both of these examples illustrate the importance of being able to put your skills into action. As you think ahead to your field placement, what skills are you most excited to use? What skills or areas are you most concerned about? Being aware of this can help you prepare for the time ahead and can also help you craft learning objectives that will ensure you get to try out these skills.

1.4 Theory to Practice

Theory to practice is the opportunity to apply concepts learned through formal coursework to real-life practice settings. Applying theory to practice is often seen as one of the most difficult skills to master, and the opportunity to begin this work is one of the key elements of **fieldwork**. Fieldwork gives you the chance to tie your education to your work with individuals. It involves taking the information you have learned in class and from your textbooks and applying it in real life. For example, you may have a client who is very worried about her child not speaking yet. You will use your knowledge about human development to guide your assistance. Based on the child's development, this may mean referring the child for **evaluation** or simply discussing with the client that not speaking yet is developmentally appropriate for the child's age.

Learning to Fly: The Value of Experiential Learning

From the student perspective, starting your **internship** often begins with mixed feelings. On the one hand, it is exciting—after all those classes, you finally get to do something! On the other, it can be a little scary—most of us worry about looking stupid or "messing up" at work, especially in the beginning of a placement. It may help to remember this type of reaction is normal. Even so, there is a reason to approach the first day with some **confidence**. Your instructors have been there before you, and the classes you took have at least provided a good cognitive map of what this field is all about.

Viewed this way, the internship represents an opportunity to experience the work environment in action, to get acquainted with members of the staff, and to begin to learn about the job. Your internship is the perfect opportunity to practice the skills and values you have been striving to embody.

Using Theory to Inform Practice

One of the hallmarks of being a professional is having the knowledge of how to be effective at helping others. Without theory to underpin it, our work would be like throwing everything at the wall to see what sticks. That approach is not only ineffective, it is also unfair to our clients to experiment with solutions on them.

The information and theory you gain through your education—including developmental theory, theories of social problems, and an understanding of families and other systems—can help you understand the issues your clients face and visualize solutions. As mentioned earlier, this can ini-

tially feel very intimidating, but the more experience you get, the easier this skill becomes.

A Theory-to-Practice Case Study: Jing's Challenge

Jing was interning at an agency that served rural seniors. One of her clients, Robert, had been referred to the agency by his physician. Robert had recently been diagnosed with Parkinson's disease and was frequently falling at home. Jing met with Robert, who insisted he was fine and refused any changes to either his activities or his environment. Jing remembered a theory—selective optimization with compensation—that she had learned in her class on aging, which stated that older adults will often sacrifice some activities or independence in order to continue to participate in activities that have more value for them. Jing knew that Robert enjoyed playing golf with friends, so she suggested that making changes to his home would decrease his falling incidents and increase his ability to continue to play golf. By pairing the changes with an activity that Robert valued, Jing was able to get Robert to allow grab bars to be installed in his bathrooms and staircases. Using theory, Jing was able to create a solution that increased Robert's safety while supporting his quality of life.

Theory to Practice Licenses and Attributions

1.5 Using an Equity Lens

One of the givens of human services work is that human services workers interact with a wide variety of people from varying circumstances in our day-to-day work. This includes Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) communities as well as other marginalized people. As mentioned earlier, human services covers a wide range of professions that work with a wide range of people. We also know that our students themselves come from a wide range of backgrounds and experiences. One of the intentions of this text is to give attention to these areas and how they may affect and inform our work.

Defining Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI)

For our purposes, the following definitions will be used throughout the text:

- **Diversity**: The practice or quality of including or involving people from a range of different social and ethnic backgrounds and of different genders, sexual orientations, etc., that may or may not intersect with each other.
- **Equity**: The quality of being fair and impartial and providing equitable access to different perspectives, lenses, and resources to all students.

- **Equity lens**: A way of looking at and acting on issues of justice to ensure that outcomes in the conditions of well-being are improved for marginalized groups, lifting outcomes for all.
- **Inclusion**: The practice or quality of providing equal access to opportunities and resources for people who might otherwise be systemically excluded or marginalized, such as those who have physical or mental disabilities and members of other minority groups.

Equity-Informed Fieldwork

One of the strengths of including **fieldwork** in your education is the opportunity to see how issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion play out in our day-to-day environment. This text aims to include ideas about how to make sure that you understand and feel empowered to address these issues wherever you encounter them—in the classroom, with clients, or within the agency itself. It is easy to make the assumption that others see a situation the same as you do. It is important to take a step back and ensure that your vision is not clouded by your own assumptions or judgments and that you are taking the time to hear and acknowledge other points of view. This is what is meant by using an equity lens.

The official definition of human services as a profession includes "addressing not only the qual-

ity of direct services, but also by seeking to improve accessibility, accountability, and coordination among professionals and agencies in service delivery" (National Organization of Human Services, n.d.). You have a responsibility to yourself, your clients, and the profession to address issues of equity and inclusion in your work. Your **internship** provides you with the opportunity to begin practicing these values.

Guiding Questions in Equity-Informed Fieldwork

Here are some questions to keep in mind as you begin your internship. You may want to refer to these intermittently as a way to ensure you are keeping your equity lens in focus:

1. Who are the racial/ethnic and underserved groups impacted by your agency? What groups show the most persistent or severe disparities?
2. What are the barriers to more equitable outcomes for these clients (e.g., mandated, political, emotional, financial, programmatic, or managerial)?
3. How has the agency intentionally involved stakeholders in the vulnerable communities affected by agency policies to inform decision making? How have *you* engaged your own clients in decision making?
4. Does the agency have a plan for inclusive communications and engagement and to communicate the process of this work and opportunities for clients in compelling, clear, accessible, and transparent ways?
5. How does the agency evaluate its progress and stay accountable to equity goals? How will *you* evaluate your progress and stay accountable?

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1.6 Conclusion

This chapter underscores the importance of **fieldwork** for the human services student. Internships give you the opportunity to apply the knowledge you have learned in the classroom and get valuable feedback on your work. The ability to apply **the-** **ory to practice** is key, as are challenging structural and social barriers to **equity** and **inclusion**.

Conclusion Licenses and Attributions

1.7 Practice

Journal Prompts

1. What are you looking forward to as you begin your **internship**? What are your concerns? What are some ways you can apply an **equity lens** to your experience?
2. What are some of the theories you have learned? How do you think these might apply to your agency?

Self-Care Activity

1. **Self-care** is a major concern for people working in human services. Working with people who are experiencing problems can be rewarding, but it also can be exhausting and frustrating. Many of the issues we help clients with involve complicated solutions across several different services or agencies. The rate of turnover tends to be very high in the field due to factors such as the unpredictability of daily work, the ever-changing landscape of funding and service guidelines, and the frustration caused by the difficulty in getting things done.

We feel that self-care is a critical element for workers to be able to continue to do the work they love without feeling burned out. In this text, we end each chapter with a different self-care activity. Our hope is that while you are still an intern, you can begin to develop the habit of regular and ongoing self-care. Attending to your own needs is an important part of your professional training.

Self-care looks different for everyone. I may enjoy hiking to unwind, while someone else prefers a cup of tea and a good book. We supply different suggestions throughout the text—use the ones that work for you, and modify or ignore the ones that don't feel like a good match. Our hope is that by the end of your internship, you will have a "toolbox" of self-care skills to take with you into the field.

For this chapter, we ask you to compile a list of the activities you do now to help you destress and get back to a feeling of balance. Focus on activities that help you clear your mind, and avoid activities that can lead to future difficulties, such as drinking or smoking. You can put this list in your journal or post it somewhere to remind you to take time to care for yourself. The activities in this book should help you expand that list. **Chapter 5** discusses the importance of self-care in more detail.

Class Discussion Topics

1. Discuss your list of self-care activities, either as a class or in small groups. Add activities that other classmates mention that you would like to try.
2. Discuss using an **equity** framework. What

does this mean to you, and how do you think this applies to your agency?

3. Look back at the case studies of Diego, Lisa, and Jing. How can you apply their experiences to yours? What theories do you think will be most appropriate for the agency you will be interning at?

4. How can you use the CSHSE **Fieldwork** Standards to guide your internship experience?

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Understanding Your Role as an Intern

How to Navigate this Book Online

Table of Contents

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In the table of contents, you can click on a chapter title to navigate to the beginning of that chapter.

You can also click on the "+" in the table of contents to see the chapter's sections and navigate directly to that place in the book.

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2.1 Chapter Overview

You have been a student in human services for a while now. You have probably grown comfortable in your role as "student." What does it mean to transition to the role of "intern?" You may have lots of questions about your **fieldwork**—some that may be general in nature, and some that will be specific to your agency. In this chapter, we try to address some of the most common concerns and also offer some suggestions for handling your first weeks in the field.

After reading this chapter, you will be able to do the following:

- Communicate the basic expectations of working in the field.
- Recognize the importance of understanding and complying with agency policies and procedures.
- Brainstorm methods to integrate into the field placement team.

- CROWN Act: An act to protect people against discrimination based on their hair texture or their hairstyle.
- Confidentiality: Spoken, written, and behavioral communication practices designed to provide and maintain an individual's or group's privacy. Includes licensing and Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) requirements.
- Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA): A federal law enacted in 1996 to improve the portability of health care information, protect the privacy of individuals' personal health information, and ensure that all health information and data is securely stored.
- Learning Agreement: A document created by the student, instructor, and work supervisor that outlines the goals and objectives for the student's learning during the internship or field experience.
- SMART goals: Specific, written objectives that demonstrate and measure your learning in the field.

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2.2 Walking Through the Door

The first steps in beginning an **internship** involve getting comfortable at your agency and becoming familiar with the **culture** of the office and the work. Human services agencies vary widely in their approach to working with clients. Many agencies that work with youth embrace a more casual culture in order to put clients at ease. Some governmental agencies still follow a very formal

and professional business culture. Some have policies that pertain only to the clothing of employees, while some agencies also have expectations for how their clients present themselves. Following are some tips and guidelines to help you develop **confidence** as you begin your **fieldwork**.

Looking the Part

Most placement sites will have a dress code of one type or another. During your interview or orientation, take time to observe how others in the office are dressed. This can help guide you as you plan ahead. If you have already interviewed, you can ask your supervisor what is expected and then observe your colleagues during your first few days on the job.

Modern dress codes can feel like a minefield—many agencies that work with youth encourage a casual style of dress, including jeans. Outreach workers often have to dress for both the weather and possible grimy environments. On the other end of the scale, some settings require that interns and employees avoid specific clothing. For example, a local youth correctional facility does not allow jeans or certain articles of clothing in gang-related colors.

In the past, dress codes have been used to discriminate against interns or employees by categorizing them as "not a good fit"—a phrase that often meant "doesn't look like us." Recently, workplaces have been paying more attention to how their dress code impacts their workers and their appearance in the community. The U.S. Equal Opportunity Employment Commission (EEOC) has set **laws** around what type of business practices are allowed when it comes to employees' attire. In general, employers must use a standard that applies equally to all workers within certain job categories. For example, if an employer allows casual clothing, it would be illegal to then not allow clothing representing a specific ethnic region. Employees can also ask for accommodations for religious reasons as well as disability. Unless accommodating this request poses a hardship (which can be defined differently), the employer must comply. For example, if the working conditions require respirators, a religious exemption for facial hair may cause safety issues. Unless a safe alternative exists to allow for the employee's facial hair, it may be disallowed.
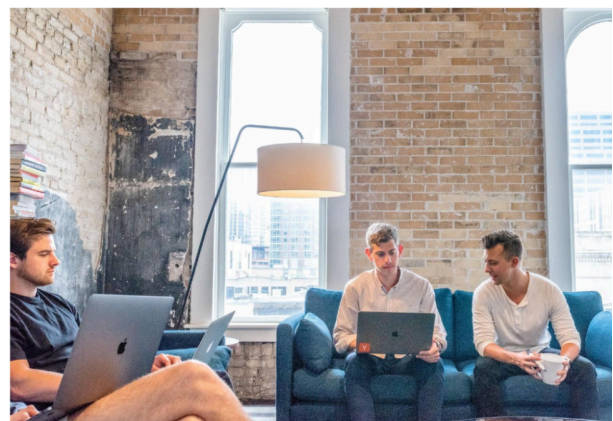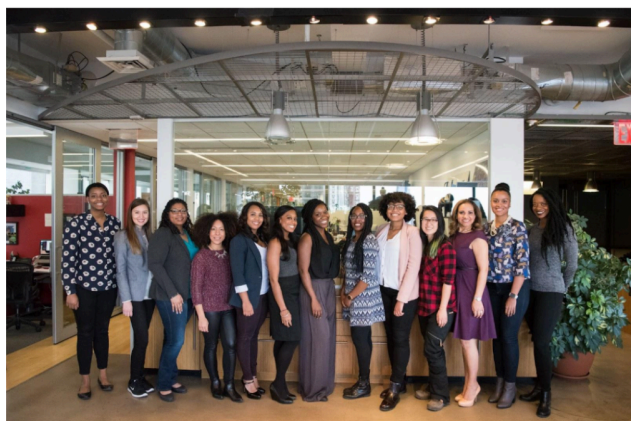
Figure 2.1 What is considered "work appropriate" depends on a lot of factors, but there are some limits to what agencies can require.

Another example of the changing world of business attire is body art. Many employers previously had strict policies about piercings and tattoos. However, as these expressions have become more commonplace, many workplaces have loosened these restrictions, if not eliminated them altogether. As shown in Figure 2.1 a and b, different workplaces may have different policies.

Your best resource on questions regarding dress code would be speaking to your supervisor and/or a representative of human resources if you have concerns. The sooner you can get your questions answered, the more comfortable you will feel about your choices. For example, is it okay to wear a "Black Lives Matter" T-shirt? If the agency is very casual, this may be no problem. However, many agencies have policies against shirts with any statements on them. But if other slogans or statements are allowed, then the content should not be a problem.

One intern was completing their training with a local community corrections agency. Since prisoners in that location were allowed to wear jeans, employees and interns were prohibited from wearing any type of denim clothing. The intern wore black jeans on the last day of training. When questioned, the intern stated that they thought the pants were okay because they were black. The intern was dismissed immediately and let go from the agency. By not taking the guidelines seriously, they lost the opportunity to complete their internship.

Dress codes are subject to certain federal policies and guidelines meant to help agencies develop standard practices and also to protect employees from prejudice. The EEOC outlines the limits on dress codes as follows:

In general, an employer may establish a dress code that applies to all employees or employees within certain job categories. However, there are a few possible exceptions.

While an employer may require all workers to follow a uniform dress code even if the dress code conflicts with some workers' ethnic beliefs or practices, a dress code must not treat some employees less favorably because of their national origin. For example, a dress code that prohibits certain kinds of ethnic dress, such as traditional African or East Indian attire, but otherwise permits casual dress would treat some employees less favorably because of their national origin.

Moreover, if the dress code conflicts with an employee's religious practices and the employee requests an accommodation, the employer must modify the dress code or permit an exception to the dress code unless doing so would result in undue hardship.

Similarly, if an employee requests an accommodation to the dress code because of his disability, the employer must modify the dress code or permit an exception to the dress code, unless doing so would result in undue hardship. (EEOC, n.d.)

Recently, more attention has been paid to the unintended consequences of dress codes. Another section of the EEOC website addresses common concerns about religious discrimination in the workplace. Regarding dress codes, the EEOC (n.d.) states, "Absent undue hardship, religious discrimination may be found where an employer fails to accommodate the employee's religious dress or grooming practices." There is growing awareness that "traditional business dress" reflects the habits and styles of the majority White culture. It is hard to state that an agency is embracing **diversity**

when the dress code does not acknowledge individual differences. Many agencies are updating their dress codes to reflect a better understanding of this.

In Focus: Race-Based Hair Discrimination and the CROWN Act

In addition to the confusion around interpreting dress codes, a history of racism and sexism has informed how dress codes have been applied. The **CROWN Act** began as a grassroots effort to protect Black women who choose to wear natural hairstyles. CROWN stands for "Creating a Respectful and Open World for Natural Hair." The act specifically bans discrimination based on natural and/or traditional hairstyles, including characteristics like hair texture and "protective" hairstyles such as braids, locs (sometimes known as dreadlocks), Bantu knots, and twists. Some of these hairstyles are shown in Figure 2.2.

Oregon is one of 23 states that have already passed some version of the CROWN Act, while it is being proposed in many more. At the federal level, the CROWN Act passed the U.S. House of Representatives on March 18, 2022. The act was blocked in the Senate in December of that same year. Some Republicans have refused to support it, claiming that hairstyles are already covered in current antidiscrimination law. However, many courts have defined discrimination in a narrow way that does not include hairstyles.

Figure 2.2 Knots, locs, and natural hair are some of the hairstyles protected by the CROWN Act.

2.3 Setting Goals and Managing Time

Internships are a large time commitment. In addition to the hours spent at the **internship** site, students must spend time preparing for the internship, commuting, completing paperwork, reflecting, and processing the events as part of their education and professional growth. Setting clear goals and planning your time will ensure that you are able to manage this additional workload.

Scheduling

One of the worst things you can do at an internship is to be erratic in your attendance or to change schedules frequently since doing so can disrupt the lives of clients, the duties of the person supervising you, and the function of an agency. The primary editor of this book has found that scheduling difficulties is the single most frequently reported problem that agencies have with interns, so it is to be avoided.

It is important to figure out a schedule that works for you and for the site. To that end, you should work with the site's supervisor or director to arrange the hours that are best for all parties. Some sites will be very accommodating with your scheduling needs. Others may have more rigorous requirements. In all situations, it is important to

remember that the agency is being generous enough to give you supervised clinical duties. Sometimes they depend on you being there to help address client needs. So, remember to be open and honest with the person doing the scheduling in order to avoid conflicts. If a schedule conflict does occur, be sure to talk to the supervisor in advance about what is best for the agency and yourself.

Keeping track of hours might present similar issues. On one hand, you are not an employee and can "leave" any time you want. On the other hand, the class and the agency require accountability, especially if there is an hours-worked requirement. Some sites will give you a copy of the schedule but leave it to you to track the hours needed for the internship. Others might require signing in and out.

The Importance of Managing Your Time

Planning and managing your time will help you get the most out of your **fieldwork** experience. There are various types of planners and trackers—paper, electronic, and even phone apps. It is important to find one that works for you but that also works for the agency as well.

The most important feature of a planner is that you use it

If you forget to record appointments and other information, the planner is irrelevant. Likewise, if you record the information and then don't look at it, the planner is useless. It may take some experimenting to see what fits best for you, but since the benefits of weekly schedules are clear, experimentation is worth the effort.

What to put in your planner

Over the years, our students have identified several helpful actions to help them stay on track:

- Plan your day before you start it and spend time each day planning, reviewing upcoming commitments and due dates, etc.
- Write a set of goals for yourself each day and have a clear idea of what you want to accomplish during the next week.
- Put classes and fieldwork schedules in your weekly calendar. Add your work schedule, too, if needed.
- Make a list of things to do for each day.
- If you have a job, make a clear schedule of activities you have to do on work days.
- Have a list of priorities such as deadlines, tests, and quizzes.
- Pay attention to your fieldwork learning outcomes and make sure to schedule adequate time to accomplish these. Keep track of your progress throughout the term.
- Plan ahead because things could come up unexpectedly.
- Save extra time for bigger projects.
- Plan to show up early.

As you are working on creating a plan and a schedule, remember that even people who stay focused on what is important get sidetracked and add too many activities to their days. It can be helpful to review what you want to get done and what your roles and responsibilities are. Consider whether your list is reasonable given the amount of time you have in your day. Is there something you can leave out if you need to reserve some time for a higher priority (such as maintaining your sanity)? Many agree with David Allen's quote, "You can do anything, but you can't do everything." (For more information on productivity expert David Allen, visit his website, **Getting Things Done**).

Setting Goals

What do you want to achieve during your internship? Your answer will help you focus your time in those directions. Often, your learning objectives are either vague or general and hard to measure. Setting goals can help you operationalize your learning to help you stay on track and be able to show your growth. By "operationalize, we mean you should, for instance, be able to describe what your goals are so that others can help you identify opportunities or assignments that will help you reach them. This type of planning and prioritizing allows you to play an active role in your education. It also helps others know what to do to help make the internship a good experience for you.

A helpful strategy for creating goals is to use the acronym SMART (adapted from Doran, 1981). **SMART goals** are specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-based (or trackable). The more specific your goal, the easier it will be to know when you have achieved it. In figure 2.3, we take a learning objective often assigned to human services students in their first term of internship and turn it into a SMART goal.

Category	Action	Purpose
S – Specific	Student will complete orientation modules and review agency policy handbook.	We know how the student will learn this information.
M – Measurable	Student will review policy information with supervisor.	We know how this task will be assessed.
A – Achievable	Student will have access to these materials and be given a reasonable amount of time to complete this goal.	We have expectations for both the student and the agency in writing.
R – Relevant	Student will understand how the agency operates to ensure a successful internship.	We can help the student be successful as the internship continues.
T – Time-Based (or Trackable)	Student will complete this learning objective by the end of week 3 of fall term.	We know when the student is expected to complete this goal.

Figure 2.3 This table shows how you can adapt a learning objective using SMART goals. The original learning objective was "demonstrate an understanding of placement site structure, mission, services, policies and procedures."

Let's say your goal is to help with referrals. You could make it a SMART goal by phrasing it this way: "My goal is to manage the referral desk (specific) for five hours (measurable) one day a week (achievable) in order to become familiar with local resources (relevant) for ten weeks (time-based)." This also makes the goal measurable and time-based, since you will know at the end of the term whether this was achieved. Whether your goal is achievable depends on different factors. The longer you stay at an agency, the more independence you will probably receive because your supervisor and coworkers have had a chance to see your work. You may have to create goals that build upon each other throughout the time you are there. "Relevant" has to do with what your personal goals are for your internship. If knowing about resources in the community is something you seek, then staffing the referral desk is relevant to you. If you are more interested in learning about how to work with clients within the agency itself, then this goal may not be relevant enough for you.

Learning Agreements and Contracts

Your college, the placement site, or both may have certain legal obligations or routine requirements that must be met. One of them, for example, may be the need for a formal legal agreement between your educational institution and the placement site. Another one could be a written plan that includes such details as who you will be working with, what duties you will be performing while at the site, and the educational objectives you, the site, and your instructor feel are important for you to master.

One of the most empowering ways to achieve your goals is to draw up an internship or **learning agreement**. A learning agreement is often developed in written form so that the college, agency, supervisor, and student are all quite literally on the same page about expected duties, requirements, and objectives. Another benefit of a written agreement is that it allows you to track progress and provides you guidance if the agency points you in directions you did not intend or agree to go in. In other words, these agreements are best handled in writing so that they can be used as a guide to

help create a good internship plan and to maintain focus throughout the internship experience. In this sense, the learning agreement is like a contract that you may refer to throughout the process.

Here's some information that a learning agreement could include:

- Your expected duties
- Your work hours
- Your supervisor

When creating your learning agreement, be sure to use the SMART goal strategy discussed earlier in this chapter. This contract may also spell out limitations to your activities and who will be providing liability insurance for you while you are on site. If these matters are not spelled out, you should talk to both your supervisor and your instructor about them.

Clear contracts provide the foundations for a rewarding internship experience. Consequently, your goals will also be reviewed by supervisors and agencies who will have some sound ideas and suggestions regarding your expectations and limitations. Sometimes they even see more potential in you than you might be aware of yourself. This situation can create an opportunity for you to grow beyond your expectations.

Accordingly, sometimes it is best to modify an agreement. In that case, changes should be approved by you, your supervisor, and your instructor. Occasionally, a college or site will not use a contract but have only a verbal agreement with an intern. Although this situation isn't the best, you can at least document what you agree

to do and not do and then discuss that with your instructor.

Although rare, sometimes an internship does not work out well for a variety of reasons. For example, there may be a sudden change in supervisors or insurmountable interpersonal conflicts. Though no one wants to see an internship go in this direction, alternatives, and sometimes even a new site, can be found without penalizing the student. Your instructor may also find helpful ways of dealing with this situation if you bring it up to them.

Setting Goals and Managing Time Licenses and Attributions

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2.4 Becoming Part of the Team

Starting your **internship** can be a very intimidating experience, especially if this is your first time working in the helping field. It can be helpful to keep in mind that everyone in the field felt that way at the beginning. No one expects a new intern to be knowledgeable about all aspects of the work or the agency. Following are some suggestions to help you gain comfort in your new role and to develop your role as a team member.

Observing and Participating

So you've been accepted as an intern and completed your training. It's time to start working—right? The first few weeks of an internship can be bumpy as you and your colleagues navigate this new relationship. Some agencies have long-standing internship programs that are very structured and have defined goals and expectations. Many smaller agencies develop each internship according to the student's goals and the needs of the agency at the time. The first style can give you the comfort of clear expectations, but the second can give you the opportunity to individualize your experience to best meet your own goals. Either way, you may have to put in some effort for people to begin to recognize you and count you as part of the team.

One of the best methods for becoming part of the team can be the simple act of asking questions. You may have learned about some procedures in training, but how the job is in a policy manual is not always how it looks in real life. If you aren't sure about something, ask a colleague. If you observe a colleague solving a problem for a client, ask them how they learned that skill. It can feel very intimidating to speak up, but this helps workers not only get to know you but also recognize your eagerness to learn. If you sit quietly at your desk and wait to be asked to do something, you may sit there for quite a while! Try to be active in the office and ask for opportunities to participate. Asking to shadow another worker or observe paperwork can be a great way to show your willingness to be a part of the team.

Interns often feel pressure to know everything once they start. The truth is, human services workers can get the education, but until they've actually completed some work in the field, their knowledge will remain limited. It is very powerful to be able to say "I don't know" and ask others for help. Doing so helps you build rapport with your new colleagues. By being friendly and open, you begin to establish a working relationship that will be beneficial throughout your internship. People in general like to help others (especially those in the helping fields), so asking questions or asking for assistance helps build bonds between team members.

Looking for Ways to Help

You've begun to get comfortable, but you still feel like you are not an active part of the team. This can be a common feeling for interns. Sometimes it results from interns not trusting that they know enough to begin helping. Sometimes it comes from experienced colleagues' uncertainty that the intern can handle the work. Sometimes it comes from the team forgetting that they have another team member to rely on. And sometimes it comes from a combination of the three. It may be time to step up and start advocating for what you need.

An easy way to start is to volunteer to help with tasks. This can mean offering to accompany a worker on a home visit, file paperwork, or even run errands. It may feel easier to offer help with simple tasks like coffee runs or filing papers. Make

sure to pay attention to what the case workers are doing, and challenge yourself to offer to help them with more challenging tasks, too. Once your team gets used to seeing you busy and involved, they will be more likely to think of you when something needs to get done. For example, one intern was working for the chief of police of a small town. The police chief mentioned that he had to attend city council meetings, and the intern asked to come along for the experience. He was impressed with the intern's insights and questions about the council. During the last few months of the internship, he asked her to attend the meetings independently to represent the chief's office and type up formal reports for him afterward. This level of autonomy and trust was far beyond the student's expectations when she began.

If you've offered several times and continue to get turned down, it may be time to check in with your supervisor and/or your instructor. They are responsible for making sure that you are receiving opportunities to meet your learning goals. They can advise you about where opportunities may be and support you in your role as a team member.

Case Study: Finding Ways to Help

Casey had dreamed of being a Child Protective Services caseworker since childhood. She began pursuing a human services degree with this goal in mind. She nervously applied, went through the screening process, interviewed, and was offered an internship. She couldn't wait to start.

By the time she was able to begin, however, the COVID pandemic had begun. The agency had shifted to partial telework for all employees to limit the number of people in the office at a time. It turned out that Casey's supervisor was not going to be on-site during the days of her internship. In fact, there was a completely different set of people in the office each day of the week that she was there. She called me (her field instructor) at the end of week 2, dejected and wondering whether she had made a mistake. She said she sat at her desk waiting to be assigned work but felt that everyone ignored her. She felt like most of the caseworkers didn't even know who she was. She was frustrated and angry that her supervisor was not available to help her become part of the team.

Knowing this had been Casey's dream, I encouraged her not to give up. I suggested that the only way people would get to know her would be if she introduced herself and asked whether she could help. She was hesitant to do this but took my advice. Her coworkers were delighted to have the help and soon found that Casey could be relied on to do thorough and prompt work. Caseworkers assigned her increasingly important work over the course of her internship. At the end of her internship, she received glowing marks from her supervisor and everyone she had worked with. She was immediately offered a temporary position in hopes of bringing her on permanently. She was so glad she did not quit and had been brave enough to ask for what she needed.

Becoming Part of the Team Licenses and Attributions

2.5 Focus on Ethics

Internships are often the first chance students have to take on professional roles helping others. To distinguish care work we perform for friends, family, and community members from **internship** and professional practice, students must be aware of the ethical obligations of performing the roles of a human service worker. Professional **ethics** are designed to ensure that services truly benefit the client and community, not the student, university, or agency. We will dive deeper into professional ethics in **Chapter 7**.

Confidentiality

Confidentiality involves spoken, written, and behavioral **communication** practices designed to provide and maintain an individual's or group's privacy. Confidentiality is one of the key concepts taught to most human services students because it is a crucial dimension of human services work. The need for confidentiality is also a part of your obligation to the practicum class, as well as the agency and its clients, both during and after the internship.

It is likely that you have heard about the importance of confidentiality in your other courses or maybe even know about it from your experience with the healthcare system's HIPAA (Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act) requirements. Confidentiality is usually a legal obligation, though it may have modified forms, such as in law enforcement, public records, or certain clinical situations involving abuse, homicide, or suicide. When a site indicates that something is confidential, it means just that!

However, sometimes students do not realize that this rule may also apply to their training and even classroom situations, especially when they are talking about their clinical experiences or listening to others talk about theirs. Consequently, it is important to remember to "disguise" your training experience when talking about it. Common ways of protecting confidential information include omitting or substantially changing names and identifying information of clients, staff, and agencies—sometimes even your own site!

For example: One intern mentioned in the classroom portion of their practicum that a staff member at the site said that she had just found out she was pregnant at age 43. The intern mentioned the woman's first name and added that the individual was distressed by the news and did not want to tell her family about it until she figured out what she was going to do. Unknown to the intern, the woman was the mother of one of the other students in the class, so that student had just found out—along with everyone else in the class—that their mother was pregnant.

Confidential guidelines may apply to agency material, such as handbooks and policies. Caution is especially important when it comes to using

social media because once something is online, it is impossible to fully erase it. If you must make a reference, say something such as "at work." It is also important to make sure not to gossip in the classroom about happenings at the site if they are not relevant to the course. After all, there is a difference between professional dialogue and just spreading gossip. Confidentiality is so important that colleges may dismiss students from an internship or even a program for sharing confidential information. Be sure to understand expectations concerning confidentiality with your instructor as well as your supervisor. Finding out what the rules are and adhering to them are part of what it means to be a professional.

Focus on Ethics Licenses and Attributions

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2.6 Handling Bumps Along the Way

You may encounter obstacles that will make starting the **internship** seem difficult. One common problem is starting at the internship site later than other students. This predicament is particularly frustrating because it forces you to get the required hours done in a shorter time period and puts you behind on gathering information for your presentation, your paper, or whatever closing activities are required for the site or course. Even if you find and start an internship early, scheduling your hours ineffectively can put pressure on you near the end of the semester when time is running out. Sometimes, however, students encounter problems because they complete the required hours at the site too soon in the course and then have nothing left to contribute to class discussions.

Instead, it is best to try and space your internship hours out evenly during the semester, though it is also a good idea to finish at the site a little before the end of the semester so that you are not overburdened at the end. Pacing is important, as learning takes time, not just work. Finally, it may be of value to try to schedule your days at the site when there are richer training opportunities. For example, a site may do individual work on one day and group work on another and schedule team meetings or training on a third. Finding a way to be exposed to all three opportunities would create a more meaningful internship experience than just participating in one or two of them.

Sometimes agencies offer special continuing education activities for staff or take them to local, regional, or even national conferences where major speakers present material. Talking with your supervisor about attending these higher-level professional opportunities is a good idea because what they offer can be added to your résumé as additional forms of advanced training. Remember, no one will know that you are interested in attending such events unless you bring it up.

Progress, Not Perfection

Although you may have years of schooling and other job training, these are not likely to have fully prepared you for your first internship. Your education has helped you develop ideas about how things work and equipped you with information about effective approaches. However, many real-world problems that people face during their internships will not always fit textbook definitions. After all, as discussed in **Chapter 1**, there is a

difference between theory and practice. Similarly, someone who has performed quite competently in previous jobs may find the tasks assigned and carried out during an internship to be significantly different.

In general, the process of acquiring new and complex skills moves slowly, which means you do not have to learn everything overnight. Malcolm Gladwell's popular book *Outliers: The Story of Success* (2008) discusses the research of K. Anders Ericsson, which states you need 10,000 hours of practice in order to become an "expert" in a given field. There is also research from Harvard's Graduate School of Education that shows fast learning is no better over time than slow learning (Hough, 2019). Focusing on learning everything quickly can lead to false assumptions and gaps in knowledge.

Instead, it is best to try to keep an open mind about your progress. Keep in mind that when your instructor or supervisor critiques your work, it is because they care about it and see potential in you. Similarly, it is just as important to acknowledge and accept positive feedback because this helps reinforce growth and build **confidence**. If a supervisor takes the time to tell you that you are doing a good job, it means you earned the compliment, so enjoy it!

Instructor and Classmates as Resources

When settling into the internship, it is helpful to realize that your fellow students in the internship class are a part of your network both in and beyond the course (figure 2.4).

Figure 2.4 Remember that if you have a question or problem, it is likely that someone else in the class is facing the same situation.

During the semester, your classmates can also become an important resource for your development as a professional. As long as the rules of **confidentiality** set down by the college, instructor, and site are appropriately honored, talking with classmates about your experiences at the site provides an opportunity to compare individual internship environments as well as opportunities in the field. For example, work environments can be as small as a single office in a courthouse or as large as an entire floor of a building. The inner workings of each facility will differ as well. Discussions about the styles of supervisors, roles of staff members, and unique aspects of each facility may provide insight into numerous areas within the field. If there are several people in a class

working in a similar setting, you may also see that they vary considerably in how they approach helping people.

The classroom portion of the internship experience is like having several internships at the same time. After all, you can learn from the experiences your colleagues share and come to know things about different types of sites as career possibilities. Such groups may also help you prepare for team meetings. These are meetings where the staff members of an agency come together as a group to help clients by reviewing notes, establishing comprehensive treatment programs, evaluating client progress, discussing client issues, and so on.

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Figure 2.4. **Conversation: 6/365** by **Todd Fong** is licensed under **CC BY NC SA 2.0**.

2.7 Conclusion

Hopefully you now have information that will help you comfortably become a part of your **internship** site. By being aware of the agency **culture** and expectations, you can set yourself up for success. You also now have some ideas for advocating for yourself if you are having difficulty finding your role. Much of this will get easier over time. We will go over the later stages of an internship in a later chapter.

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2.8 Practice

Journal Prompt

1. What are you noticing about your placement? What surprised you about the agency, the work, or your own role? How is DEI addressed at your agency?

Self-Care Activity

1. As mentioned at the end of Chapter 1, we will give suggestions for journal prompts and **self-care** activities at the end of each chapter of the text. For this chapter, we want to point out that using your journal for **self-reflection** can also be a self-care activity. If you perceive the

journal entries as homework or a chore to get through, you will lose some of the most important learning that can come from journaling. Keeping a **fieldwork** journal gives you a chance to really think about your experiences and begin to understand your work and your place in the field. You can address the prompts as they pertain to your experiences, but you can also journal about other issues related to your placement—for example, a particularly difficult interaction with a client. Journaling about experiences when they happen can give you insight if you are faced with a similar situation later. The journal is meant to be a tool for you to reflect on and use in the future.

Class Discussion Topics

1. While interacting with a client, they begin to ask questions that you are uncomfortable answering. The questions could be about your family, your school, or even where you are from. You are not comfortable sharing these details about your personal life. You want to respond without being too rude or too revealing.

There are four courses of action you can take. Divide into groups and discuss the advantages and risks of each choice:

1. Kindly let the client know that you do not feel comfortable answering those questions.
2. Ask the client why those questions are important to them.
3. Share what you are comfortable with (without oversharing) if it will benefit the helper-client relationship.
4. Talk with your supervisor about the interaction.

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"Journal Prompt" and "Self-Care Activity" by Sally Guyer MSW and Yvonne M. Smith LCSW are licensed under **CC BY 4.0**.

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Getting to Know the Agency

How to Navigate this Book Online

Table of Contents

Every page of this book has a button labeled CONTENTS. In most browsers, this button will be in the upper left corner. You can click anywhere on that button to show the book's table of contents. Clicking the button again hides the table of contents.

In the table of contents, you can click on a chapter title to navigate to the beginning of that chapter.

You can also click on the "+" in the table of contents to see the chapter's sections and navigate directly to that place in the book.

Turning a Page

If you're reading on a larger screen, look at the bottom of the page. There is a button in the lower right corner labeled "Next →" that you can click to move forward, and another button in the lower left corner labeled "← Previous" that you can click to move backward.

Reading on Smaller Screens

On smaller screens, like phones and tablets, the CONTENTS are at the top of the page. Look for the Previous and Next buttons at either the top or bottom of the page.

3.1 Chapter Overview

Your **fieldwork** begins long before your first day as an intern. Getting to know your agency begins with researching the available fieldwork sites and doesn't end until the final day of your practicum. Your first steps involve learning about the practical aspects of your agency, such as where to park and what door to use. In this chapter, the focus is on getting to know the whys and the hows of your agency, including how it is organized and regulated and its role in micro, mezzo, and macro work in the community.

After reading this chapter, you will be able to do the following:
 ·

- Identify the characteristics of an effective agency or organization.

- Explain how human services organizations are organized, regulated, and governed.
- Differentiate between macro, mezzo, and micro influences on an agency/organization's structure and service delivery systems.

- Accreditation: The process of the organization being evaluated by an independent third-party entity for conformity to and compliance with a specific set of industry standards.
- Board of directors: A governing body of individuals who have been elected, selected, or appointed to oversee an organization.
- Fiscal solvency: An agency's ability to service any debt and meet its other financial obligations.
- Laws: The rules a country, state, or other governing body sets, maintains, and enforces. Violations of laws are illegal and can be punished by fines, probation, or incarceration. In the United States, there is a hierarchical structure for authority: federal, state, county, and local.
- Mission statement: The formal summary of why an organization exists, whom they serve, and how they are unique.
- Organizational charts: Charts that demonstrate who in the agency is responsible for specific duties, who reports to whom, and how the work of the agency is organized.
- Organizational culture: A shared set of beliefs and actions that are supported by the structure of the organization, strategies used, and policies.
- Regulations: The rules a governing body sets, maintains, and enforces. Violations may result in fines and/or loss of licensure or certifications.
- Statutes: A law written by a legislative body.
- Strategic planning: Outlines the steps and processes involved in incorporating an agency's mission, vision, and values into their day-to-day activities.
- Vision statement: The formal summary of what an agency or organization wants to achieve.

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3.2 Assessing Your Agency

Every agency and organization has a history, a reason for existing. That history—whether it is long or short—has played a role in shaping the mission and vision statements of the organization, the long- and short-term strategic plans, and how the agency is organized, funded, and monitored. Knowing that story will help you understand your agency and assess it for strengths and weaknesses (or areas of emerging strength). It will help you understand its systems and service delivery methods. This is the foundation for your **internship** and will help you become a more effective human services professional from day 1.

In Focus: Using Public Data

Many organizations have a brief history of their agency on their website. A simple online search will help you discover both the history the organization wants the public to be aware of and the unflattering aspects that end up on the news and other forms of media. As an optional activity, you may want to browse websites that assess and rank nonprofit organizations such as **BBB Wise Giving Alliance**, **GuideStar**, **CharityWatch**, and **Charity Navigator** to name a few. Most focus on the financial practices of an organization, while others such as **Glassdoor**, **Fairygodboss**, and **Comparably** review general company data, compensation rates, reviews from employees, and **diversity** practices. These websites rely on anonymous information that is not vetted for accuracy. As a result, what appears to be insider information can be skewed to the negative or the positive. The savvy intern will review the information and form clarifying questions to discuss with their site supervisor.

There are no perfect human services agencies—the human aspect of the work makes that an impossibility. However, organizations and agencies can be primarily healthy, primarily unhealthy, or have both healthy and unhealthy aspects. Knowing what to look for and what kinds of questions to ask will continue to help you long after your internship concludes. The following sections cover some areas to pay attention to.

Mission Statements

A **mission statement** is the formal summary of why an organization exists, whom they serve, and how they are unique, and a **vision statement** is the formal summary of what an agency or organization wants to achieve. In other words, the mission statement tells you what an agency is aspiring to do now, and the vision statement tells you what they want to do in the future.

More and more organizations are adding a list of core values that guide their work. Depending on funding sources, leadership choices, and many other factors that we will be discussing later in this chapter, your internship site may not have a mission statement and a vision statement. Some agencies have both, some choose to have just one, and others choose to combine both into one statement.

For example, Goodwill Industries International (2019) lists their mission, vision, and values statements on their website as follows:

OUR MISSION

Goodwill® works to enhance the dignity and quality of life of individuals and families by strengthening communities, eliminating barriers to opportunity, and helping people in need reach their full potential through learning and the power of work.

OUR VISION

Every person has the opportunity to achieve his/her fullest potential and participate in and contribute to all aspects of life.

OUR VALUES

Respect – We treat all people with dignity and respect.

Stewardship – We honor our heritage by being socially, financially, and environmentally responsible.

Ethics – We strive to meet the highest ethical standards

Learning – We challenge each other to strive for excellence and to continually learn.

Innovation – We embrace continuous improvement, bold creativity and change.

The Wild Tomorrow Fund (2019), which focuses on habitat preservation, has a combination mission-and-vision statement:

We face the extinction of one million species in our lifetimes. But there is still hope. The solution to the extinction crisis lies in the expansion of natural habitats in threatened wild places. We must enlarge and protect the spaces devoted to the natural world in order to save the amazing variety of life on our planet—called biodiversity.

The most effective mission statements tend to be one to two sentences and have three main functions. The first is to provide the public with an overview of the agency and create interest. The second is to motivate and focus the employees and service users. The third is to inform short- and long-term decisions. For example, if an organization is considering starting a new program, one of the first questions asked should be, "Is this new program in line with our mission statement?"

Here are some questions about mission statements that you as an intern might find helpful:

- When did the agency develop the current mission statement?
- What were the previous mission statement(s)?
- How was the mission statement developed? Who participated?
- How were service users involved in the development of the mission statement?
- How frequently does the organization evaluate the mission statement?
- What does the mission statement mean to you? How does it inform your work?
- Does the mission statement address issues of diversity, **equity**, and/or **inclusion**?

Vision Statements

For a vision statement to have the desired impact of inspiring those who hear or read it to get involved, it should be clear and concise. It should also be inspirational and memorable. It should paint a word picture of why the agency exists and where it is going. Vision statements leave little room for debate or disagreement—they simply state what the future will look like when the organization fulfills its ultimate goal. Consider the following examples:

- Feeding America: "A hunger-free America"

- Alzheimer's Association: "A world without Alzheimer's"
- Special Olympics: "To transform communities by inspiring people throughout the world to open their minds, accept and include people with intellectual disabilities and thereby anyone who is perceived as different" (TopNonprofits, 2022)

Experts do not agree on whether the mission or the vision statement should be longer. There are strong and convincing arguments for both and strong examples of both. In the previous example from Goodwill Industries International, the vision statement is longer than the mission statement. However, Albertina Kerr (2019), a human services agency based in Oregon, has a longer mission statement:

> MISSION
> Kerr empowers people with intellectual and developmental disabilities, mental health challenges, and other social barriers to lead self-determined lives and reach their full potential.
>
> VISION
> All people thrive in nurturing and inclusive communities.
>
> VALUES
> The values of our expert caregivers remain constant: compassion, commitment, collaboration, and advocacy.

Each organization developed their specific statements and values to best communicate who they are, what they do, and where they are going to their employees, service users, and the general public. Both are correct. Both used processes that are reflective of their history, the present, and their desired future. Both are as individual as the people they serve.

Developing mission and vision statements is a unique and dynamic process. It can be accomplished in a single meeting of key stakeholders or in a series of meetings that are facilitated by a consultant who specializes in organizational design and development. The process generally involves answering the who, what, why, and how questions of the agency for now (mission statement) and in the future (vision statement). Who does the agency serve? What services does the agency provide? Why does the agency provide those services (vs. other services?) How does the agency deliver those services? When you as an intern are able to answer those questions, you will have taken a giant step in the journey of getting to know your agency.

Here are some questions about vision statements that you as an intern might find helpful:

- When did the agency develop the current vision statement?
- What were the previous vision statement(s)?
- How was the vision statement developed? Who participated?
- How were service users involved in the development of the vision statement?

- How frequently does the organization evaluate the vision statement?
- What does the vision statement mean to you? How does it inform your work?
- Were the vision and mission statements developed together?
- Does the vision statement address diversity, equity, and/or inclusion?

After taking some time to review your agency's vision statement, take note of any questions you might have. The mission and vision statements can be used to assess the health of the agency and to measure the work that it's doing. If you notice discrepancies or have questions, this would be a good topic to discuss with your supervisor.

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3.3 How Agencies Plan for the Future

Internships are a unique opportunity to understand how agencies function, starting with how the leaders of those organizations support human service workers and sustain the organization as a whole.

Strategic Plans

Strategic planning is how organizations operationalize their mission, vision, and values (Indeed, 2022). It outlines the steps and processes involved in incorporating their ideals into their day-to-day activities. If the **mission statement** tells you who an agency is, and the **vision statement** tells you where the agency is going, the strategic plan is the road map that explains how the agency is going to use their mission statement to achieve their vision statement in the next five to seven years. A review of the mission and vision statements is usually part of the strategic planning process, as is the identification and refining of the agency's values. The plans are usually lengthy and filled with charts, graphs, and specific ideas for getting from where the agency is to where they want to be in

the next five to seven years. At least, that is how it is supposed to work.

In the past, human services organizations have developed their strategic plans at the highest level of the organization, utilizing the skills of senior leadership and the governing bodies, such as the **board of directors**. Once developed, the plan is usually presented briefly at a staff meeting, placed in a notebook, and then set on the shelf for reference, where it is rarely reviewed until the next strategic planning process five to seven years later. Middle management and direct service staff may or may not be given access to the full plan, and even when all staff have access to that notebook, the plans tend to be written in language more common in the business world than in human services.

While the intent may be to have the plan direct and guide the work of the agency, the complexities of running a human services organization can be overwhelming, leaving little time to review the strategic plan. Situations beyond the control of the planning body can also interfere with the agency's ability to implement its plan. For example, it is highly unlikely that strategic plans developed prior to 2020 included any planning for how to deliver services safely during a global pandemic.

The good news is that things are changing, and strategic plans do not need to be cumbersome or difficult to read or to sit on a shelf gathering dust. Agencies and organizations are beginning to develop infographics to help communicate the basics of their strategic plan and keep the key concepts on everyone's mind. This increases transparency, **communication**, and the likelihood of the strategic plan being fully implemented.

The example in figure 3.1 is from Lane Community College in Eugene, Oregon. The infographic clearly shows how the mission drives the plans that lead to key outcomes.

Figure 3.1 Lane Community College's infographic delineates the connections between the mission, the goals, and the tasks involved. The mission is at the top; next are the strategic directions, followed by strategic priorities. Finally, at the bottom are the intended outcomes.

Strategic plans traditionally include the following information:

- Mission and vision statements

- Strengths, needs, barriers, and opportunities assessment
- Long-term goals
- Yearly objectives
- Specific action plans

Agencies will choose the process that works best for them, including determining who should be involved in the process. While traditionally the planning has been made from a top-down perspective, human services organizations are leading the way in involving staff from throughout the agency, community partners, key stakeholders, and service users in the process.

One way to simplify the role of the strategic plan within an agency is to use a human services analogy. Think about what you have learned so far about the concepts of case management and goal setting with a service user. If you think of the agency as a service user receiving case management services, the strategic plan would be the primary service plan for the agency. In case management, you start with an intake process where you learn about the services user and what they want to change. They identify where they are now (mission statement) and where they want to be in the future (vision statement). You help them identify their strengths and areas for growth, along with any potential barriers to their success (strengths, needs, barriers, and opportunities assessment), and then set goals with specific measurable steps and accountability plans (long-term goals, yearly objectives, specific action plans).

Not all agencies have strategic plans. In 2016, the Concord Leadership Group (CLG) published a report called the *Nonprofit Sector Leadership Report*. They estimated that 49% of the 1006 nonprofit organizations they surveyed did not have written strategic plans (CLG, 2016). Some of the reasons that an agency might not have a strategic plan have already been discussed in this section, such as lack of follow-through on past strategic plans and not having the right people participating in the

process. Another reason is the size of the agency. CLG reported that 58% of smaller agencies—those with a budget under $1 million—did not have a strategic plan (2016). In Oregon, 30% of nonprofit organizations have budgets of less than $1 million (Cause IQ, 2022). While there are many benefits to having a strategic plan, it isn't a requirement.

Here are some questions about strategic plans that you as an intern might find helpful:

- Does the agency have a written strategic plan? If not, do you know the reason?
- Have you read your agency's strategic plan? Have you asked to read it?
- When did the agency develop the current strategic plan?
- How was the strategic plan developed? Who participated?
- How were service users involved in the development of the strategic plan?
- How frequently does the organization review the strategic plan?
- Does the strategic plan include plans and goals related to **diversity**, **equity**, and/or **inclusion**?
- How does the strategic plan inform your work?

Exploring this information can help you get a feel for how the agency sets—and pursues—its goals and priorities.

Fiscal Solvency

Fiscal solvency refers to an agency's ability to service any debt as well as meet any other financial obligations. The fiscal solvency of an agency is one of the key indicators of the organization's health. Note that money wasn't mentioned. That was purposeful. Having money or the lack of money does not always indicate how an agency is doing. The focus is more on how an agency manages its

resources. Public or governmental human services agencies have guaranteed revenue streams and may or may not be fiscally healthy. We will talk more later about whether public agencies are adequately funded. Conversely, private nonprofit agencies have more complicated funding streams that are less predictable. While having adequate funding is important, money alone isn't the answer.

When referencing agency resources, we are talking about more than money or an agency's ability to collect, earn, or receive money. Resources are different for private and public agencies. For private agencies, resources include tangible items such as vehicles, property, office equipment, office supplies, products, and agency employees. Resources can also be intangible, and intangible resources need to be managed just as carefully. Agency reputation, staff morale, community partnerships, consumer satisfaction, relationships with the donor base, and social media presence are just a few examples. For public agencies, the agency resources that they can manage are primarily intangible. Technically, a public agency doesn't own anything—the public does. If a public agency has a budget deficit, it cannot sell off extra office equipment to make up the difference, because they don't own it—the taxpayers do. What public agencies can manage is their reputation, staff morale, community partnerships, and a limited amount of customer satisfaction.

So how can an intern learn about the fiscal solvency of an agency? Beyond asking your site supervisor to review the financial records, a simple internet search can reveal a great deal. Public agencies are required to make their budgets available to the public for review. For Oregon, public agencies' budgets are available on the State's website (State of Oregon, 2021b). Private agencies are required to file a 990 form with the IRS annually to maintain their nonprofit status. Those forms are available for public view, and most can be found at Cause IQ's website or other watchdog websites. What those forms do not reveal is the budgeting process each agency uses, how the budget is monitored, and who within the agency has the authority to change how the agency resources are utilized.

When assessing an agency for financial solvency, most experts agree that you are looking for a balance of funding sources. For example, if an agency is funded only through fees, there is a risk that a single event, such as a natural disaster in the area, could disrupt their ability to provide the services and eliminate their primary revenue source. If their primary funding source comes from charitable donations, they are at risk for not meeting budget demands during economic downturns. There is no perfect formula because budgeting and managing an agency's resources is an agency-specific process. Here are some things to look for regarding fiscal solvency:

- Transparency of budget and budgeting processes: Is the budget published on their website? Who is involved in the budgeting process and the budget review process? Is the budget discussed regularly at staff meetings and/or team meetings?
- Asset to debt: Does the agency have the recommended 2-to-1 asset-to-debt ratio?
- Agency endowment and/or reserve funds: Are endowment funds invested to earn interest for the agency? Endowment principal funds cannot be spent; only the interest can. Reserve funds are the monies an agency holds in reserve for potential revenue deficits and fluctuations.
- Wage ratio: How does the highest-paid employee's salary compare to that of the lowest-paid employee? It should be no more than 3-to-1 for agencies with an annual budget under $5 million and 4-to-1 for agencies with budgets over $5 million.
- Overhead ratio: Is the agency's overhead less than 25% of its annual budget? Sometimes the

overhead ratio can be as much as 35%. Some grants have a limit on how much money can be used for administrative and overhead costs.

Here are some questions about fiscal solvency that you as an intern might find helpful:

- Have you read your agency's budget?
- How was the budget developed? Who participated?
- How were service users involved in the development of the budget?
- How is the budget monitored? Is the budget discussed at staff meetings?
- Do you know how much the agency keeps in reserve funds? Does the agency have an endowment?
- What are the agency's most valuable resources that are not monetary?

- Does the budget reflect the mission, vision, and strategic priorities as stated by the agency?
- Does the budget address issues of diversity, equity, and/or inclusion?
- How does the budget inform your work?

These questions may help you see how (or whether) the agency budget aligns with their stated goals.

Private versus Public Agencies

The table below provides a list of both private and public human services agencies and where their money comes from (figure 3.2).

Private Human Services Agencies	Public Human Services Agencies
· **Albertina Kerr** · **Girl Scouts of Oregon and Southwest Washington** · **National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) of Oregon** · **Juliett's House** · **Goodwill Industries of the Columbia Willamette** · **Oregon Food Bank**	· Oregon Department of Human Services (ODHS; Aging and People with Disabilities, Child Welfare, Self-Sufficiency, Department of Vocational Rehab, Office of Developmental Disabilities, Administrative Services) · Oregon Youth Authority · Oregon Health Authority (OHA) · Oregon National Guard · Oregon Employment Department
Where does the money come from?	Where does the money come from?

Figure 3.2 A comparison of private and public human services agencies and their funding sources.

Private Human Services Agencies	Public Human Services Agencies
· **Fees for goods and/or services** · **Individual donations and major gifts** · **Bequests** · **Corporate contributions** · **Foundation grants** · **Government grants and contracts** · **Interest from investments/ endowments** · **Loans/ program-related investments (PRIs)** · **Tax revenue** · **Membership dues and fees**	· Fees for goods and/or services · Tax revenue/Oregon legislature · Federal grants and contracts · Local grants and contracts

Figure 3.2 A comparison of private and public human services agencies and their funding sources.

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Figure 3.1. "Lane Community College Strategy Map" © **Lane Community College** and is included under fair use.

3.4 Understanding the Agency Hierarchy and Structure

Now that you are aware of the hows and whys of an agency, it is time to increase your familiarity with those who are in your agency. Every organization has formal and informal structures, which contribute to the intentional and unintentional **culture** of that organization. This section will review some of the factors that influence the structures agencies use and inform their culture.

Formal Structures

Organizational charts, job descriptions, employee handbooks, and policy and procedure manuals are the most common ways for an agency to demonstrate their formal and supervisory structure. They are hierarchical by design, even when an agency holds the value of shared leadership or the belief that you can lead from any position. Organizational charts allow monitoring entities to know who in the agency is responsible for specific duties, who reports to whom, and how the work of the agency is organized. These are all critical parts of maintaining licenses and accreditations, which may be connected to funding streams. Knowing the supervisory hierarchy is also important if an employee is having performance issues, is experiencing workplace harassment, or—on a more positive note—is being recognized outside of their unit for exceptional work.

There are basic organizational charts for both public and private agencies. The examples used in this section are a broad overview and generalized for most agencies. Your organization may have variations, but the concepts are generalizable.

Public agencies start with the state governor and state legislature at the top of their charts as funding. The **laws** that inform the policies and procedures come directly from those two entities. These are followed by the director for each agency, followed by division directors, and so on until all employees are listed within their supervisory units. Figure 3.3 provides a simple chart that shows the basic structure.
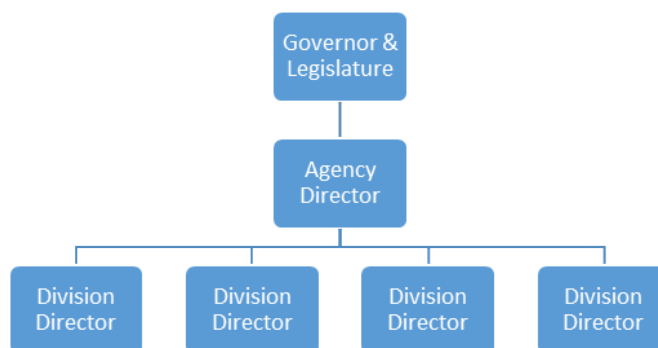
Figure 3.3 Basic structure for a public agency showing the government at the top, the agency director next, and then all other directors below the agency director.

Private agencies have a similar structure, with the board of directors at the top of the chart, followed by the top agency executive such as the president, chief executive officer, or executive director. Much like in a public agency, the next level is the program directors, followed by their teams who provide direct services. Figure 3.4 shows a simple representation of a private agency organizational chart.
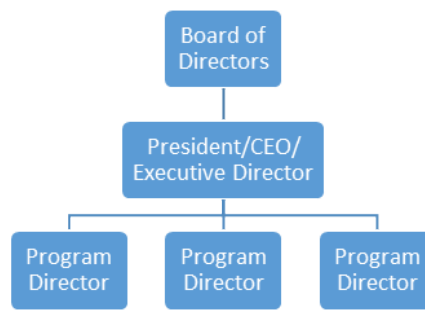
Figure 3.4 Basic structure of a private organization showing the board of directors at the top, the agency chief executive officer next, and then all program directors reporting to the CEO.

Organizational charts help you as an intern begin to see how your field experience site has formed itself, who might know the answers to some of your questions, and who the identified leaders are. It can give you a broader understanding of the entire agency, not just the unit where you will be learning and working. It is also a visual representation of how information in the agency is officially communicated. Think of an organizational chart as a map of the agency.

Informal Structures

Formal organizational systems keep an agency moving forward in a predictable and planful way. They are, as the label suggests, written down, documented, and prescribed. However, since human services agencies are filled with humans and not machines, there are several informal systems that you will need to be aware of and pay attention to in your role as an intern.

Informal systems include how information flows, specifically unofficial **communication** (sometimes referred to as gossip). Gossip has a bad reputation, much of which is deserved. However, informal streams of communication exist in every organization, and they can be toxic to agency culture, or they can be used as a tool to provide information prior to formal distribution. For example, before the budget is released through formal channels, a supervisor could let the most "communica-

tive" member of the team know the overview for their department, whether it is budget cuts, increases, or no changes. The communicator is likely to then share that information with peers and colleagues prior to the budget meeting, alleviating the stress of not knowing. As an intern, it is good to identify the informal channels of communication but not participate in them.

Leadership is also both formal and informal. While there are identified agency supervisors, you will notice that within every team there is an informal hierarchy of leadership. Informal leadership is the ability of a person to influence the behavior of others by means other than formal authority conferred by the organization through its rules and procedures.

Informal leadership is basically any type of leadership that is not based upon formal authority (Grimsley, 2022). This may be based on seniority, expertise, or personality. Watch for who sets the tone of meetings. Is it the supervisor or one of the team members? Who on the team is the first one to set **boundaries** or confront nonproductive behavior? Who eats lunch with whom? What are the values of the individual teams and units within the agency? How does agency history inform internal conflicts? Informal leadership can have a negative impact on an organization if it is coercive or oppressive. If that occurs, it must be addressed formally using the organizational structure.

The formal and informal structures meld together to form agency culture. Culture is formed

intentionally and unintentionally. As an intern, you will have an opportunity to observe and provide feedback about the productive and unproductive aspects of the agency culture, which will be discussed in the next section.

Here are some questions about organizational structure that you as an intern might find helpful:

- Do you have a copy of/access to your agency's organizational chart?
- What informal structures have you noticed? Is it the norm to bring lunch or go out to lunch?
- Who are the formal and informal leaders in the agency?

- What does your supervisor want your role to be in team and staff meetings?

Understanding both the formal and informal structures of an agency can help you navigate your work more smoothly and efficiently.

Understanding the Agency Hierarchy and Structure Licenses and Attributions

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3.5 Learning What Your Agency Really Does

An important, if not always acknowledged, aspect of any place that you work or study via a practicum or **internship** is the **culture** of the organization. It is often written about as a part of the strategic efforts of for-profit organizations, but it exists in every workplace, whether or not it is explicitly identified. As a student who has yet to enter the work world, you have the unique opportunity to focus on this critical aspect of your future workplaces.

Organizational culture can be defined as a shared set of beliefs and actions. These beliefs are supported by the structure of the organization, strategies used, and policies. Any aspect of organizational culture can be explicitly stated (e.g., in written policies, employee manuals and training, and forms and instructions for clients) or can be implicitly known. Shared values and social norms that are implicitly known, or assumed to be known, can be more difficult to discern by any newcomer to the organization.

Organizational Culture and Inclusion

Expected behaviors and roles that are not explicitly stated can quickly create feelings of exclusion or incompetence for newcomers if they do not guess the "correct" behavior. For example, consider the faculty that are your teachers. What is the expectation about how you address them? Is it "Professor A?" "Mr./Mrs./Ms./Miss/Mx. A?" Perhaps by first name? If the faculty member explicitly tells students how to address them, either in writing or by verbal introduction, it is more likely that all will feel more comfortable and safe addressing the instructor by name.

Allan Johnson, the noted sociologist known for his work related to the social construction of difference, writes about this same phenomenon in his blog post titled "Aren't Systems Just People?" In his vivid example about a car breaking down right outside a church hosting a wedding service, he helps us understand how critical exposure to differing social systems and cultures is to being

able to handle both familiar and unfamiliar situations:

> To see the difference between people and systems, imagine you're in a social situation such as a church wedding, and that someone who's never been in this particular place before—whose car, let's say, has broken down and they're looking for a phone to call for help—comes in the door and looks around. Most likely, they will immediately know where they are in a social sense, and, even more important, they will have an accurate idea of what the people in the room expect of them even though they have no personal knowledge whatsoever of them. So long as they accurately identify the social system they are participating in and their position in relation to it, they will be able to behave appropriately without violating the expectations that go with that situation. (Johnson, 2013)

Now I ask you to imagine that you have never been in a church or gone to a wedding. It's more likely that you would behave "inappropriately" or be seen in a negative way because you do not know what the expectations are in these environments. Does this mean that you are less capable? Less able to learn? Not aware of **boundaries** and social cues? No—it just means that you have not had experience in that particular environment.

The above example illustrates the implications of making information and expectations explicit to new employees, interns, their clients, and the general public. If you enter a new workplace, or a social service agency where you need help, getting clear information about what the cultural norms are will help you to feel comfortable and be successful in this environment. One way for those at the agency to practice **equity** and **inclusion** is to communicate expectations and procedures in an explicit manner so that everyone (not just people who have experience in that kind of environment) has access to that information.

Culture

Looking at the broader cultural context is another way to think about organizations. There are several ways to distinguish different cultures from one another. Your experience living in the United States has exposed you to US culture and values, influenced by other Western industrialized societies. If you have had other cultural experiences, such as having lived or traveled to other countries, you may have been exposed to other ways of thinking about these values.

F. R. Kluckhohn and F. L. Strodtbeck (1961) have identified six dimensions that are helpful in understanding such differences. These are as follows:

1. How people view humanity. Are people basically good, or are they evil? Can most people be trusted or not? Are most people honest? What is the true nature of humankind?
2. How people see nature. What is the proper relationship between people and the environment? Should people be in harmony with nature, or should they attempt to control or harness nature?
3. How people approach interpersonal relationships. Should one stress individualism or membership in a group? Is the person more or less important than the group? What is the "pecking order" in a society? Is it based on seniority or on wealth and power?
4. How people view activity and achievement. Which is a more worthy goal: activity (getting somewhere) or simply being (staying where one is)?
5. How people view time. Should one focus on the past, the present, or the future? Some cul-

tures are said to be living in the past, whereas others are looking to the future.

6. How people view space. How should physical space be used in our lives? Should we live communally or separately? Should important people be physically separated from others? Should important meetings be held privately or in public?

Assessment

The beginning of your exposure to a workplace environment is a terrific time to assess the culture. It is often said that people are on their best behavior when they first start an experience such as a new job or a new class in college. Do you think this is true? How about the people who have more authority and power in those situations (the employer, supervisor, mentor, or teacher)? Do you believe that they are showing their best, most favorable behavior in the first interactions? You can learn a lot about organizational culture by observing, especially in an in-person (not Zoom or other electronic meeting) environment. You may also observe the website for similar data. As you learn more about the organization, make sure that expectations for dress code, **communication**, if/how to address coworkers and clients, and other

daily behaviors are known to you. If it is not clearly stated, ask. This is your internship, and you will get the most out of it if you express your desire to understand the organization, including its shared values and expectations. Here are some questions about assessing the culture of your agency that you as an intern might find helpful:

- How are newcomers welcomed?
- What is the first information that you receive?
- How do coworkers acknowledge each other?
- What information do you receive in writing? Are materials up to date and current?
- What is on the walls? Look for mission statements and other messages meant to communicate the purpose or values of the organization.
- Is there an easy way to contact someone via the website?
- Does the environment look cared for? Is there a person there to greet you in person?

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3.6 What Are the Rules?

The rules at your agency go beyond warning you not to harm clients or community members. They represent the values of an organization and how the leaders of that organization put those values into action in the real world.

Employee Handbook, Training, and Continuing Education

One way the agency formally communicates agency **culture** is through the employee handbook, initial training, and opportunities for continuing education. When you joined your educational program, you likely were given a program handbook, and some colleges and universi-

ties have an additional handbook for those who participate in the field experience program. Those handbooks explain the program expectations, requirements, and potential consequences of not following those requirements.

The employee handbook you receive at your agency should include the same kind of information along with material about hiring practices, employee benefits, and other requirements as dictated by the **laws**, **statutes**, codes, and licensing requirements for the agency. The handbook, along with the job description, is a contract between the agency and the employee that describes what the employer will provide and what they expect from their worker. Healthy organizations tend to update their handbooks regularly and make copies available electronically and in hard copy.

Onboarding, or the process of hiring and starting a new employee or intern, is another key indicator of agency culture. One best practice is for the new person to have a formal orientation to the agency on their first day. This usually involves filling out additional paperwork, reviewing the agency handbook, and an introduction to policy manuals. When this process is organized and welcoming, it communicates that the employee or intern is valued and important. That doesn't always mean the person isn't valued when the process is not organized, but it is something of which to be mindful. Think back to your experience on your first day at your site. What specifically did the agency do to help you feel welcome and wanted? Was there a designated place for you to sit or put your belongings? Were you given an agency email account? Did team members express excitement about your **internship**? Did they remember your name the next day? Were you given access to the tools you need to be a successful intern?

Another way an agency demonstrates culture is through continuing education. Human services is a constantly evolving field. New interventions and treatment modalities are always being developed, and to stay effective, helping professionals need to seek out new learning opportunities. Agencies that include monies for continuing education demonstrate that they value their employees and support and expect growth. Agencies who are not able to send employees to formal trainings or conferences can host brown-bag lunch conversations or book club discussions. There are many ways for agencies to invest in their employees' ongoing education without spending money.

Policies, Procedures, and Practice

One of the most overlooked tools for assessing an agency is policy and procedural manuals. Before you stop reading, let me explain why. Policies tend to exist for one of two reasons. The first option is that the policy is required by a governing or licensing body—for example, it is the law that all employees who work in a child-serving agency pass a criminal history screening, and every agency must have a written policy. The second reason for a policy to be developed is that something happened either in that agency or a similar one that created concern, and a policy was developed. These second-reason policies are what describe the agency history and cultural practices.

Another way to think about policies is that they represent the macro level of human services. The policies provide the bigger framework in which the work takes place.

For example, not all organizations are required to have a policy regarding DEI, yet some choose to develop a policy to communicate to employees, services users, and the general public their commitment to DEI practices and education. Another example is an agency that had a policy that banned potlucks. Upon investigation, the policy had been developed by the previous human resources director who had gotten sick after an agency potluck and, out of fear of a lawsuit (and personal discomfort), developed and implemented a policy. That

story tells a great deal about how decisions and policies were developed in that agency and who had the power to change agency culture without input. (The policy was eventually repealed and replaced with a safe food-handling policy that absolved the agency of responsibility if someone got sick after a potluck.)

Policies are important because they provide structure to tell an employee what they must and must not do. They are formal, and they are reviewed and monitored periodically for appropriateness and need (e.g., the potluck policy.) Policies also keep an agency safe from legal action when an employee acts outside of the policy parameters. In private agencies, policies are approved by the board of directors before they can be implemented and legally bind the agency to specific actions (or non-actions). This helps lower the cost of insurance, which keeps the overhead expenses low. In public agencies, the process is more detailed and specific because it involves the legislature and other regulatory bodies, laws, statutes, and administrative codes, which we will talk about in a later section. For these reasons, policies are designed to be specifically vague to avoid the need for editing. The employee knows what they must do, and must not do, but not what they can do, or how to do what the policy requires. That is the role of the procedures.

Procedures take the policy and fill in the space between the musts and must-nots. Procedures represent the mezzo level of human services. Practices take the big-picture policies and offer a bridge to connect them to day-to-day activities. Procedures give you the step-by-step process of what to do. For example, in criminal history screenings, the policy states that the results must be approved before employment begins, while the procedure will provide specific instructions on what forms to fill out and submit, how to appeal false findings, and the frequency of repeat screenings. Procedures explain how to implement the policies. Procedures do not require board

approval, which allows them to be amended to meet the changing needs of an organization. While procedures are specific, they can't be all-inclusive for every potential situation or variation that develops. That is the role of practices.

Practices are how procedures really happen. Practices represent the micro level of human services. Practices are how those policies are carried out by individual agency personnel. For the criminal history example, policy states that the screening occurs prior to employment, and procedure provides where to access the form and where to process the form and get fingerprinted. That works well until there is an anomaly—an unpredicted complication. Imagine that the perfect applicant lives two states away and cannot get fingerprinted at the site stated in the written procedure. The practice of obtaining fingerprints must be individualized for that one applicant. Practice allows the agency to be in compliance with the policy and maintain the spirit of the procedure but be individualized enough to meet the needs of a specific service user or employee.

Remember these three statements to help you distinguish between policy, procedure, and practice:

- Policy is the rule.
- Procedure is the process of implementing the rule.
- Practice is the rule in action.

Here are some questions about organizational structure that you as an intern might find helpful:

- How would you describe the culture of the agency?
- What are the DEI efforts and conversations in the agency?
- When was the employee handbook last updated?
- Who was involved in developing the employee handbook?

- Who writes/develops the agency job descriptions?
- How are policies and procedures developed?

Understanding the organizational structure can help give you a bigger picture of how the organization operates.

What Are the Rules? Licenses and Attributions

3.7 Who's Really the Boss?

By now, you may be wondering who is actually in charge of human services agencies and whether they are private or public. Public agency employees in Oregon are responsible for being in compliance with the following entities:

- Federal and state **laws**
- Oregon Administrative Rules (OARs)
- All applicable (statewide) policies of the Oregon Department of Administrative Services (DAS)
- The central administrative agency of the Oregon state government
- All applicable ODHS or OHA (agency) policies, processes, or procedures
- Provisions of collective bargaining agreements (for represented employees; State of Oregon, 2022)

That is a lot of regulatory oversight! Private agency employees are not immune from oversight, as they too must comply with federal and state laws and OARs. They also are responsible for complying with agency policies and **accreditation regulations**. It is easy to understand why a service user experiences delays in services when the systems created to serve them get bogged down with the bureaucracy designed to keep the service user safe. However, just because it can be explained doesn't mean it is acceptable to delay services due to red tape, and understanding a little about who

governs what can help explain the process and improve it. In addition to regulatory rules, agencies must also keep in mind how the professional **ethics** of the field guide their services. This will be discussed in more detail in **Chapter 7**.

Regulatory Requirements

For an agency to provide services, they must acquire permission to work with humans. For public agencies, that authority is given by the legislature. Private agencies must apply for a license; in some cases, become accredited by a regulatory organization, such as the Joint Commission on Accredited Health Organizations (JCAHO), Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF), or Council on Accreditation (COA); and demonstrate compliance with applicable laws, **statutes**, and regulations. Let's break those down.

Law, statutes, and regulations

A law is defined as a rule, usually made by a government, that is used to order the way in which a society behaves. Laws can be federal, state, or local, and they follow a strict hierarchy of authority. Agencies must comply with the most restrictive law when writing policies. Laws are cumulative and remain in effect until a new law is

passed or an existing law is repealed. Statutes are also laws, but statutes are not cumulative and have been developed by a governing body such as a city council, state legislature, or national legislature.

Regulations have the next higher level of authority and are generally developed within an act that the legislature passes. Acts, such as the Civil Rights Act, are time-limited and need to be renewed, which means that regulations, unlike laws, are also time-limited and subject to renewal.

OARs are developed by the public agency, board, or commission to explain how to implement the Oregon Revised Statutes (ORSs) they oversee. Private agencies must be familiar with all laws and regulations to ensure they have written the correct policies and procedures and are implementing them appropriately. Depending on their license, private agencies are monitored and reviewed by a public agency every one to two years. Failure to be in compliance with all laws and regulations can result in the loss of licensure and the inability to continue to provide services.

Accreditation

Some agencies add another layer of regulations by becoming certified or accredited. The accreditation process requires the agency to rigorously assess themselves using a very detailed checklist. The benefits of accreditation include increased reputation, more thorough **strategic planning**, increased accountability, and help ensuring compliance with federal and state laws. Also, having an external review gives an agency a different perspective into the quality of their services, paperwork, and processes. Some grants and other funding streams require an agency to be accredited to apply for funding, and some states make accreditation part of their licensing requirements.

Getting the Most from the Board of Directors

The last level of external structure and monitoring is the agency's board of directors (BODs). BODs come in many sizes and can fulfill a variety of roles for the agency. Some BODs are active and get involved in the day-to-day functioning, while others are passive and only communicate with the senior leadership. The purpose of a BOD is to provide oversight, prevent fraud, and ensure that agency monies, policies, and procedures are ethical and legal. Board members can be held personally liable if they fail to provide an agency with oversight.

In general, BODs have three primary duties: duty of care, duty of loyalty, and duty of obedience. Duty of care requires BODs to review agency incorporation documents, such as the article and bylaws, and update them regularly. Duty of loyalty requires members to act in the best interest of the agency and avoid conflicts of interest where the member would experience personal gain. For example, if a member were a real estate agent, they could advise the agency on a real estate purchase but could not be the listing or selling agent. Finally, duty of obedience refers to ensuring that the agency is not operating outside of the scope of service as defined by the agency's rules, policies, and bylaws (Kester and Miller, n.d.).

Board members serve for a variety of reasons. For some, it is a leadership opportunity where they can grow their skills outside of their current employment. Others find **networking** with other board members and increasing their knowledge of a new organization to be enough, while some are motivated to make a difference beyond donating money to a good cause. They desire to be part of the solution for a human problem.

Here are some questions about regulatory bodies that you as an intern might find helpful:

- Does the agency hold any certifications or accreditations?
- How does the agency stay current on changing laws and regulations?
- What is the BOD's role in the agency?
- Have you ever attended a board meeting?
- What licenses does the agency hold?
- When is the next licensing audit?

Understanding the regulatory requirements can often offer a deeper understanding of the whys and hows of service provision.

Who's Really the Boss Licenses and Attributions

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3.8 Conclusion

Now that you have learned a little about how to get to know an agency, you can reflect on your site and form questions for your site supervisor and colleagues. Getting oriented to the agency at the macro, mezzo, and micro levels can help you understand the agency and how it provides services as well as help you provide those services more effectively. Keeping the agency's mission and vision in mind can help you stay focused on your work and your clients.

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3.9 Practice

Journal Prompts

1. How does the agency/organization support their service providers/employees?
2. How does the mission and/or **vision statement** influence the daily functioning of the agency/organization?
3. Does taking a 15-minute break challenge the agency/organization **culture** (even if there is a policy that you get one)?
4. What have you observed other employees/colleagues do for **self-care**?
5. Ask three colleagues how they sustain their work daily. What are their responses? Do you think these habits might be helpful for you?

Self-Care Activity

1. Take work breaks during your **internship** this week (15 minutes every 3 hours minimum), and spend time doing something that calms your mind. Track how it makes you feel and how your internship colleagues respond. If

possible, leave your desk and/or the building. Try to focus on your breathing and relaxing your muscles.

Class Discussion Topics

1. How does the mission and/or vision of the agency or organization align with the work being performed?
2. How does the environment (photos, waiting area, office spaces, building, employees, etc.) reflect the service users?
3. How does the environment reflect (or not reflect) a commitment to **diversity**, **equity** and **inclusion**?

4. What is the "feel" of the agency? Is it more casual or formal? Is the organizational structure rigid or more free-flowing?
5. Are there **laws** in your area that protect employees who make a complaint about an agency (often called "whistleblower" laws)? How do you weigh the risks of speaking out with your commitment to social justice?

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Working Across Difference

How to Navigate this Book Online

Table of Contents

Every page of this book has a button labeled CONTENTS. In most browsers, this button will be in the upper left corner. You can click anywhere on that button to show the book's table of contents. Clicking the button again hides the table of contents.

In the table of contents, you can click on a chapter title to navigate to the beginning of that chapter.

You can also click on the "+" in the table of contents to see the chapter's sections and navigate directly to that place in the book.

Turning a Page

If you're reading on a larger screen, look at the bottom of the page. There is a button in the lower right corner labeled "Next →" that you can click to move forward, and another button in the lower left corner labeled "← Previous" that you can click to move backward.

Reading on Smaller Screens

On smaller screens, like phones and tablets, the CONTENTS are at the top of the page. Look for the Previous and Next buttons at either the top or bottom of the page.

4.1 Chapter Overview

As part of your professional training, you need to develop **competence** in many areas of your life, including the ability to work effectively across differences. You have chosen this profession because you like to be with people and attend to the diverse needs they cannot fulfill without help. Your **internship** experience will give you the chance to see how **diversity**, **equity**, and **inclusion** are addressed in the field.

The focus of this chapter is to address issues using an **equity lens**. The history of human services has numerous examples of policies and procedures that did not appropriately respect the diversity of clients. One of these examples is the

concept of the "friendly visitor" of the late 1800s, who visited the homes of the needy to decide which of them were deserving of assistance. The early charity organizations of the same era included some that were focused more on efficiency than actual assistance (Global Institute of **Social Work**, 2022). Working across difference means acknowledging the diverse backgrounds and experiences of workers and clients and providing services in a manner that focuses on equity and inclusion. Your internship will be an important building block in your understanding of how to use your own equity lens to provide the most respectful and responsive services possible.

- Privilege: The concept that minoritized groups do not generally benefit equally from opportunities afforded to the dominant group.
- Racial equality: A process of eliminating racial disparities and improving outcomes for everyone.
- SHARP framework: A method of defining and understanding the different elements involved in creating and maintaining poverty.
- Tokenism: The symbolic involvement of a person in an organization due only to a specified or salient characteristic (e.g., gender, race/ethnicity, disability, or age). It refers to a policy or practice of treating members of a minoritized, underrepresented, or disadvantaged group differently, often assuming the individual is an expert about their particular identity group.
- Vulnerable populations: The disadvantaged subsegment of the community requiring utmost care.

Chapter Overview Licenses and Attributions

4.2 Diversity Is More than Just Culture

Culture is one of those words that is difficult to explain and differs according to its use and context, even within academic disciplines. Culture, according to one source, is defined as "the collective programming of the human mind that distinguishes the members of one human group from those of another. Culture in this sense is a system of collectively held values" (Hofstede, 1991). Culture also includes "a learned set of shared interpretations about beliefs, values, norms and social practices which affect behaviors of a relatively large group of people" (Lustig and Koester, 1999). For the purposes of this text, culture refers to the set of beliefs, customs, and rituals shared by a group of individuals. This may refer to a group of people who identify with a certain place (such as indigenous groups) or with a particular religion (such as people who identify as Jewish). As an intern, you may meet people from a variety of cultures—some you may share yourself, some you may be familiar with, and some that are new. This can create challenges for you on a daily basis.

Understanding what culture means is not easy when a society is composed of several racial and ethnic groups with a long history of subjugation and marginalization. Since the 1790 census, the United States' racial and ethnic **diversity** has grown exponentially. The latest U.S. Census (2020) shows the following racial and ethnic makeup:

- 57.8% White
- 16.3% Hispanic or Latino (of any race)
- 12.6% Black or African American
- 6.2% other races
- 4.8% Asian
- 2.9% two or more races
- 0.9% American Indian and Alaska Native

- 0.2% Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander

As you can see from this data, people of color make up almost half of the population, yet this population is overrepresented in all social deficits, such as poverty, incarceration, homicide, and low medical care measures. The graphic in figure 4.1 shows how US demographics have changed over the past 20 years.

A More Diverse Nation

Asian Alone Population Was the Fastest-Growing Race Group[1] From 2000-2019

Percent change

Asian	82.2
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	72.7
American Indian and Alaska Native	56.0
Black or African American	23.1
White	9.6

Total resident population: 16.3

[1] Hispanic origin is considered an ethnicity, not a race. The population that is Hispanic may be of any race. Responses of "Some Other Race" from the 2010 Census are modified. For more information, see <https://www2.census.gov/programs-surveys/popest/technical-documentation/methodology/modified-race-summary-file-method/mrsf2010.pdf>.

United States® Census Bureau

U.S. Department of Commerce
U.S. CENSUS BUREAU
census.gov

Source: 2000 to 2010 Intercensal Estimates (2000-2009) and Vintage 2019 Estimates (2010-2019)

Figure 4.1 This chart demonstrates the growing diversity of the US population.

Cultural identity in the United States is inextricably linked to race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status. Throughout the nation's history, cultural identity has been a divisive force that prevented access to resources, rights, and benefits to those who did not conform with the predominant racial majority. This historical dynamic has shaped the identity of the nation.

Using an Equity Lens

As an intern, you will be encouraged to use an **equity lens** when working with clients. An **equity** lens involves creating the conditions that will enable underserved and marginalized populations to advance toward a level that is economically and socially equitable with that enjoyed by the dominant classes (Equity Lens, 2019).

Recent changes in the United States' diverse population and its representation in public and private institutions show more people of color holding positions of power than in previous generations. But that does not mean that people of color in the United States have reached parity—that is, the same level of socio-economic status that the dominant classes enjoy. Disparities continue across the nation. These disparities adversely affect marginalized people, who have systematically encountered greater socioeconomic barriers to employment, housing, and healthcare simply because of their race, ethnicity, religion, gender, physical disability, sexual orientation, or other characteristics historically associated with discriminatory or exclusionary practices.

The United States has become more segregated, both economically and racially, in recent decades. In 1970, 15% of families in the country lived in neighborhoods where residents were either quite rich or quite poor, yet 40 years later, that figure had more than doubled, with a third of households living in economically segregated communities. Economic inequality in the United States has returned to levels not seen for more than 90 years in part because of continued "White flight," or purposeful relocation of White Americans from racially diverse urban areas to predominantly white suburbs. US schools are becoming more segregated at the same time that the country's population is becoming more diverse (Owens, 2019).

The concept of the equity lens has been applied in the educational field, but it also has other applications for the **inclusion** of oppressed populations—in other words, the least served and most underrepresented segments of society. Using an equity lens, you can focus on understanding what equity work is required to address individual and group needs and how you can best serve the people most impacted by **inequity** and historical neglect.

Looking at the Micro, Meso, and Macro Levels

The previous section showed how equity is addressed by removing barriers to opportunities. The following section looks at individuals in their own setting. We humans are social by nature and need considerable interaction with our caregivers and our social environment to fully develop physically and mentally. To study the development of an individual based on the genetic inheritance (nature) and the external or environmental factors contributing to or hindering the individual's growth and development potential (nurture), the bioecological model of human development has been used. This model was first proposed by Russian-American developmental psychologist Uri Bronfrenbrenner as an extension of his theoretical model of human development, called ecological systems theory. You can use this model to analyze the issues faced by your clients: How are these problems created or sustained at the different levels, and how can you create solutions at the different levels?

Bronfrenbrenner's model emphasizes the complexity of the environments and systems that each individual interacts with. Each level is represented by a concentric circle. In helping professions, professionals support individuals to identify what is working well and what is negatively impacting

them within multiple systems and environments (figure 4.2).
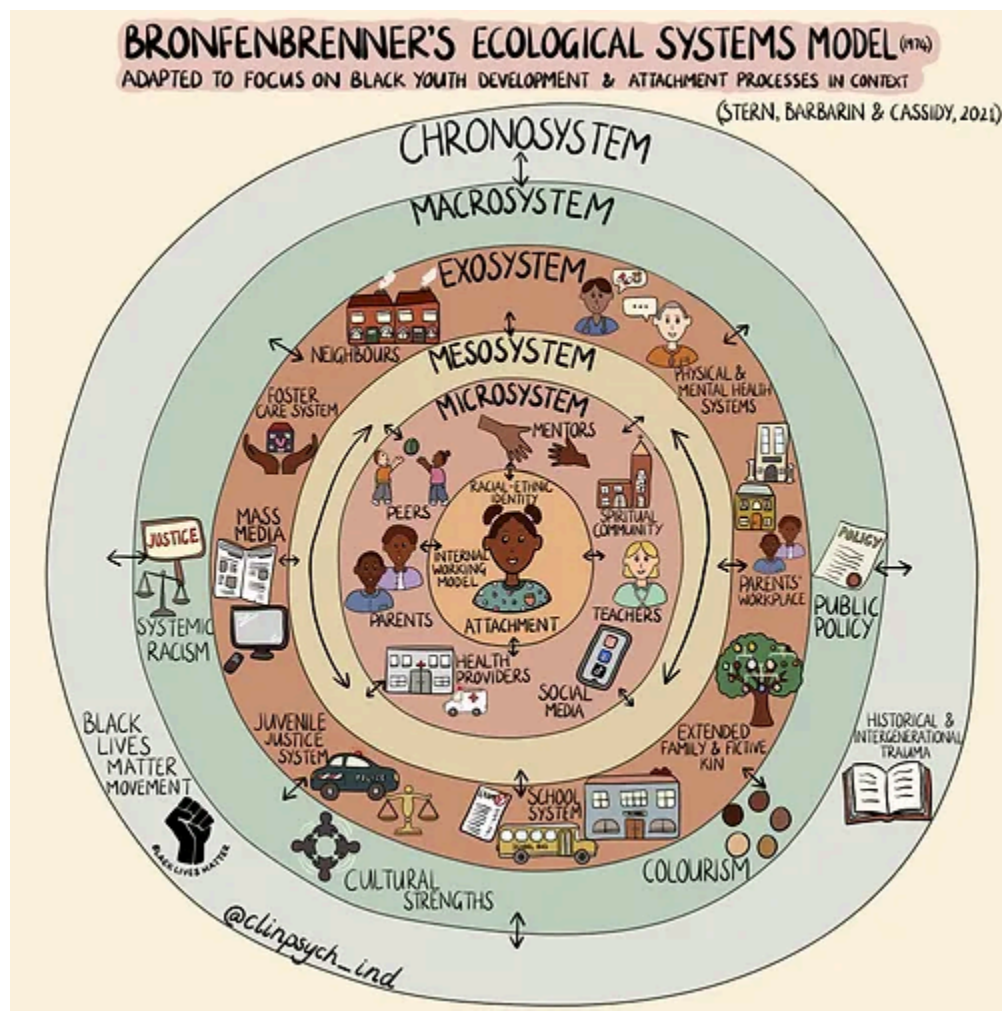
Figure 4.2 Bronfrenbrenner's ecological systems model shows the interaction between the micro, meso, and macro levels. **Image Description**

The bioecological model consists of the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem. For example, when analyzing human poverty, sociologists look at individuals in their social setting of family and friends (the microsystem). The poverty that the family experiences is impacted by whether or not they have access to the services and resources offered by the community (the exo-system). When looking at a population from an exo-system research perspective, social scientists study community groups, including teams, units, and organizations, working on behalf of a population. The ability of the community to support its members is also impacted by funding and **statutes** at the state and federal level (the macro level). Macro-level research delves deeper into the broader, more influential spheres of society, such as the political-administrative environment, which may include national government institutions or systems, regulating bodies, and even cultures. In essence, the individual belongs in the microsystem; the organizations, city services, and support are in the exosystem; and the largest system, which makes all the inner systems function properly, is the macrosystem—the largest and most powerful

institutions, cultural and societal beliefs, gender norms, and religious influences.

Using the SHARP Framework

The **SHARP framework** is a structured analysis used by human services and social workers to examine and identify the sources of **oppression** and societal structures that continue to negatively affect the lives and the quality of life of their clients (Shaia, n.d.). This model can help you examine what sources may be contributing to the issues addressed by your agency. SHARP stands for the following functions:

- Structural oppression
- Historical context
- Analysis of role
- Reciprocity and mutuality
- Power

The graphic in figure 4.3 shows the framework's application to poverty and oppression and the resulting consequences.
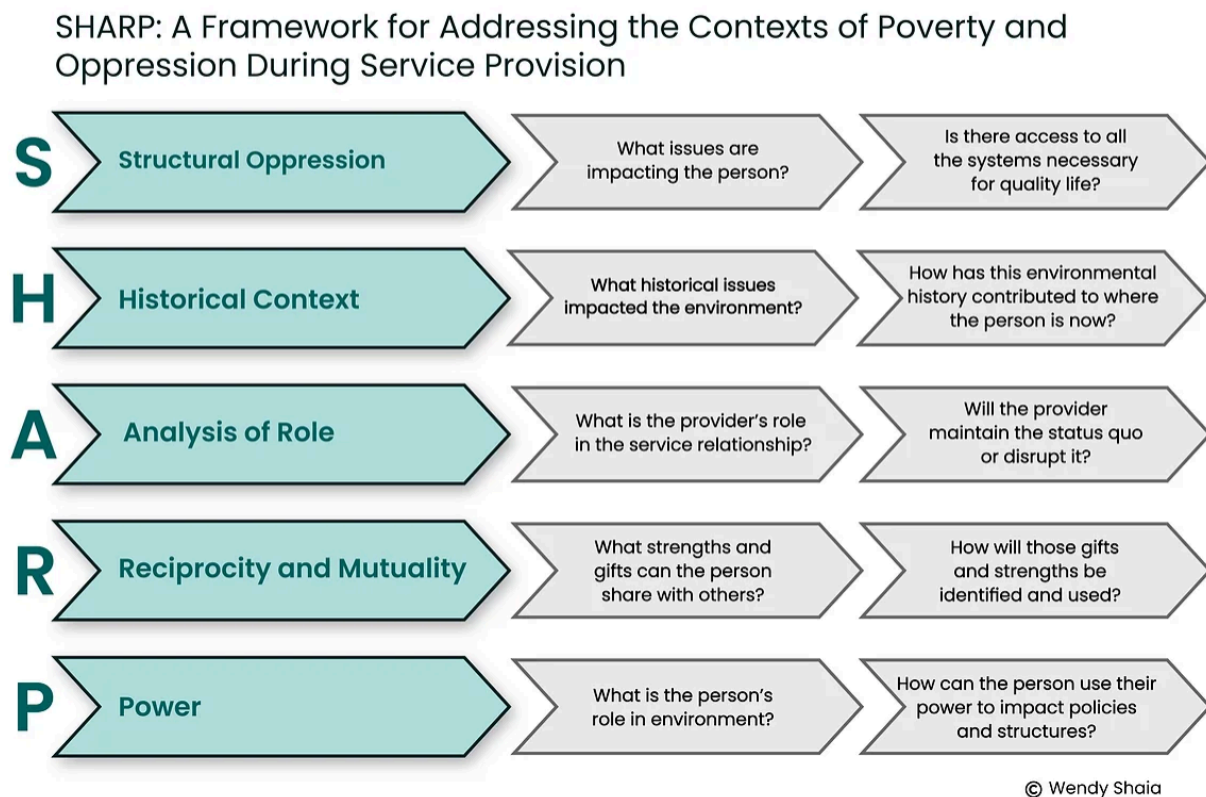
Figure 4.3 A visual representation of the SHARP framework can help you understand the importance of context. **Image Description**

Understanding Intersectionality

In 1991, legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw first described the concept of **intersectionality**, the idea that people experience multiple parts of their identity simultaneously and that these parts of themselves shape and are shaped by one another. In other words, the frameworks of race, class, gender, sexuality, age, ability, and other aspects of identity affect how an individual is seen by others and also influence how those identities are interpreted. For example, a person is never perceived as just a woman. How that person is racialized impacts how the person is perceived as a woman.

So, notions of blackness, brownness, and whiteness always influence gendered experience, and there is no experience of gender that is outside of an experience of race. In addition to race, gendered experience is also shaped by age, sexuality, class, and ability; likewise, the experience of race is impacted by gender, age, class, sexuality, and ability.

Intersectional Way of Thinking

Understanding intersectionality requires a particular way of thinking. It is different from how many people imagine identities operate. An intersectional analysis of identity is distinct from single-determinant identity models and additive models of identity. A single-determinant model of identity presumes that one aspect of identity—say, gender—dictates one's access to or disenfranchisement from power. An example is the concept of "global sisterhood," or the idea that all women across the globe share some basic common political interests, concerns, and needs (Morgan, 1996). If women in different locations did share common interests, it would make sense for them to unite on the basis of gender to fight for social changes on a global scale. Unfortunately, if the analysis of social problems stops at gender, what is missed is an attention to how various cultural contexts shaped by race, religion, and access to resources may actually place some women's needs at cross-purposes to other women's needs. Therefore, the single-determinant model obscures the fact that women in different social and geographic locations face different problems. Although many White, middle-class women activists of the mid-20th-century United States fought for freedom to work and legal parity with men, this was not the major problem for women of color or working-class White women, who were already actively participating in the US labor market as domestic workers, factory workers, and slave laborers since early US colonial settlement. Campaigns for women's equal legal rights and access to the labor market at the international level are shaped by the experiences and concerns of White American women, while women of the Global South, in particular, may have more pressing concerns: access to clean water, access to adequate health care, and safety from the physical and psychological harms of living in tyrannical, war-torn, or economically impoverished nations. Using a single-determinant model also undervalues the impact of other factors such as gender identity, sexual orientation, and disability.

In contrast to the single-determinant identity model, the additive model of identity simply adds together privileged and disadvantaged identities for a slightly more complex picture. For instance, a Black man may experience some advantages based on his gender, but he has limited access to power based on his race. An Asian man may experience some privileges based on his gender, but he faces oppression due to using a wheelchair or experiencing an unseen disability.

Intersectional Feminism

The additive model does not take into account that our shared cultural ideas of gender are racialized, that our ideas of race are gendered, and that these ideas structure access to resources and power—material, political, interpersonal. Sociologist Patricia Hill Collins (2005) has developed a strong intersectional framework through her discussion of race, gender, and sexuality in her historical analysis of representations of Black sexuality in the United States. Hill Collins shows how contemporary White American culture exoticizes Black men and women, and she points to a history of enslavement and treatment as chattel as the origin and motivator for the use of these images. In order to justify slavery, White people thought of and treated Black people as less than

human. Plantation owners often forced sexual reproduction among enslaved people for their own financial benefit, but they reframed this coercion and rape as evidence of the "natural" and uncontrollable sexuality of people from the African continent. This reframing was not completely the same for Black men and women: Black men were constructed as hypersexual "bucks" with little interest in continued relationships, whereas Black women were framed as hypersexual "Jezebels" that became the "matriarchs" of their families. Again, it is important to note how the context, in which enslaved families were often forcefully dismantled, is often left unacknowledged and how contemporary racialized constructions are assumed and framed as individual choices or traits. It is shockingly easy to see how these images are still present in contemporary media, culture, and politics—for instance, in discussions of American welfare programs. Intersectional analysis reveals how race, gender, and sexuality intersect. We cannot simply pull these identities apart because they are interconnected and mutually reinforcing.

Although the framework of intersectionality has contributed important insights to feminist analyses, there are problems. Intersectionality refers to the mutually co-constitutive nature of multiple aspects of identity, yet in practice this term is typically used to signify the inclusion of "women of color," which effectively renders women of color (in particular, Black women) as "other" and again centers White women (Puar 2012). In addition, the framework of intersectionality was created in the context of the United States; therefore, use of the framework reproduces the United States as the dominant site of feminist inquiry and the Euro-American bias of women's studies (Puar 2012). Another failing of intersectionality is its premise of fixed categories of identity, where descriptors like race, gender, class, and sexuality are assumed to be stable. A truly intersectional approach would include the more nuanced issues faced by people who identify as nonbinary, trans, multiracial, or other more fluid categories.

An intersectional perspective examines how identities are related to each other in our own experiences and how the social structures of race, class, gender, sexuality, age, and ability intersect for everyone. As opposed to single-determinant and additive models of identity, an intersectional approach develops a more sophisticated understanding of the world and how individuals in differently situated social groups experience differential access to both material and symbolic resources. Figure 4.4 visualizes the multiple intersections of identity in a wheel, with social identities expressed through roles and relationships in society. Similarly, individuals internalize social roles and make them real through their actions and beliefs.

Viewing identity through a framework like figure 4.4 is important for interns because it helps you understand that, even if your clients are experiencing a common problem (like poverty), this doesn't mean that they are all experiencing this issue the same. Likewise, your own experience as an intern will be influenced by the identities that you recognize. Some classmates will experience their **fieldwork** differently because of their own intersecting identities. You may have experienced the same issue your clients are dealing with (such as poverty, illness, or unplanned pregnancy), but that does not mean that your experiences are the same. It pays to be cautious about making assumptions about others' experiences and to be aware of how our own identities are influencing our own view of the world.

Social Identity Wheel
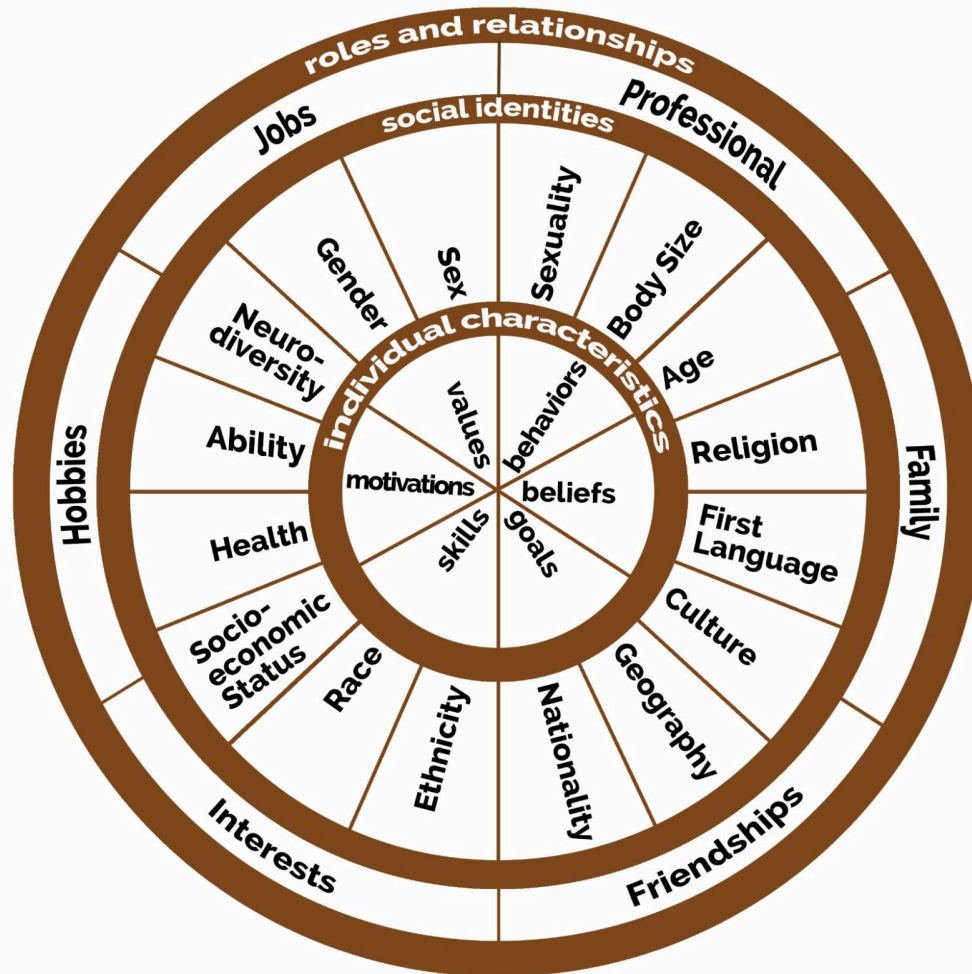
Figure 4.4 The Social Identity Wheel helps illustrate how different identities interact with each other. **Image Description**

Diversity Is More than Just Culture Licenses and Attributions

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"Understanding Intersectionality" from "**Intersectionality**" in Kang, M., Lessard, D., Heston, L., & Nordmarken, S. *Introduction to Women, Gender,* *Sexuality Studies*. **CC BY 4.0**. Edited for brevity, context, and addition of examples.

Figure 4.1 Infographic: "**A More Diverse Nation**" by the U.S. Census Bureau is in the public domain.

Figure 4.2 **Bronfenbenner's Ecological Model** is licensed under **CC BY-SA 4.0**.

4.3 Skills for Working Effectively

Residents of the United States possess diverse multifaceted cultural identities. In your professional life or **internship** experience, you may find yourself in situations where you are a member of a cultural majority and other times where you are a member of a cultural minority. Dr. Pamela Hays (1996, 2008) developed the ADDRESSING framework, a model for recognizing and understanding our individual identities and how they intersect within us (figure 4.5).

Cultural characteristic	Power	Less power
Age	Adults	Children, adolescents, elders
Disability	Temporarily able-bodied	Persons with disabilities
Religion	Christians	Jews, Muslims, other non-Christian
Ethnicity	Euro-American	People of Color
Social Class	Owning and Middle Class (access to higher ed.)	Poor and Working Class
Sexual Orientation	Heterosexuals	Gay men, Lesbians, Bisexuals
Indigenous Background	Non-Native	Native
National Origin	US-born	Immigrants and Refugees
Gender	Male	Female, Transgender, Intersex

Figure 4.5 The ADDRESSING model shows 10 major factors of cultural difference that are common in the United States (Hays, 2013).

You can use the ADDRESSING framework to reflect on how your cultural membership influences your ability to work with people of similar or dissimilar cultural backgrounds. ADDRESSING stands for the following identifiers that contribute to our complete understanding of our own cultural identity:

• Age

• Developmental disabilities from birth
• Disability acquired through disease or accident
• Religion
• Ethnicity
• Sexual orientation
• Socioeconomic status
• Indigenous group membership
• Nationality

- Gender

Understanding Implicit Bias

Implicit bias is a combination of unconscious beliefs and attitudes that we have toward certain groups of people, which can affect our work, relationships, and care decisions. We can overcome these biases by first examining and locating our blind spots. By questioning these unconscious beliefs, we can then actively work to get rid of those that affect how we interact with others (Berghoef, 2019).

Scientific research on how the brain works has shown that automatic thought processes shape our behaviors, beliefs, and attitudes. These automatic processes lead us to form patterns based on small amounts of information. Later these patterns may be expressed as positive or negative attitudes. Although our brains allow us to organize and filter our perceptions, biases may influence our decision making and could create errors in our judgment. These unconsciously held sets of associations about a social group are also known as stereotyping. Implicit biases are learned associations and the result of social conditioning, usually beginning at an early age. Most people are unaware that they hold these biases.

When our behavior is guided by factors found in our implicit bias, it manifests negatively in the interactions we have with people at our schools, places of employment, and in our legal system. Studies on implicit racial bias in educational settings indicate that biases create barriers for racial minorities to quality education and success in the classroom. In the economic sector, national and state labor **laws** prohibit workplace discrimination, yet implicit bias continues to be a significant factor in equal treatment. For example, a 2015 study examined the association people make with "Black-sounding names," like DeShawn and Jamal, and "White-sounding names," like Connor and Garrett. The study found that "participants tended to associate the Black-sounding names with larger, more violent people" (Lopez, G. (Mar 7, 2017) Vox.com Effects in the Legal System). In the judicial system, the Black and Hispanic populations experience different treatment, not only in the courts where Black defendants are likely to receive harsher sentences than White defendants. In a jury trial, the jurors are more likely to be more biased toward a defendant whose race differs from the majority of the jury.

You can lessen the impact implicit bias has on others by learning about strategies that mitigate implicit bias. These strategies suggest methods to interrupt your thinking patterns to give you time to check for implicit biases. The strategies include slowing down before reacting to people and situations, considering the situation from multiple points of view, and practicing simple mindfulness strategies to help you stay focused on your present interactions. For an in-depth discussion of strategies, and some helpful resources, review the American Academy of Family Physicians resource **Strategies to Combat our Implicit Biases**.

Curiosity and Humility versus Competence

Cultural humility refers to a tool originally used to educate medical personnel working with an increasingly diverse cultural, racial, and ethnic population in the United States, but the concept has been applied also to social service providers and researchers working with diverse populations. The underlying principle of cultural humility is the understanding that to work with other culturally different people, we must first examine our own cultural beliefs and identities through a **self-reflection** process (Tervalon & Murray-Garcia, 1998). As we develop cultural humility by examining our own background and social environment, we come to an awareness of how these

have shaped our cultural experience. Cultural humility is "best defined not as a discrete end point, but as a commitment and active engagement in a lifelong process that individuals enter into on an ongoing basis with patients, communities, colleagues, and with themselves" (Tervalon & Murray-Garcia, 1998, p. 118). The cultural humility process posits that because the nature of **culture** is mutable, always changing through various influences and locations. Individually we also move daily between several cultures, e.g., home/family workplace, school, social, and religious group cultures. The process objective is to make us aware of the values and beliefs we learned from a combination of cultures that will help us to better understand others (Yeager & Bauer-Wu, 2013).

Cultural competence

Cultural **competence** has long been an integral training component in many organizations that require continuing education classes. The focus of many of these trainings is on how to care for underserved patients and how to ensure that their cultural beliefs and practices are not negatively impacted by the interaction with the medical or social service provider. The ultimate objective is to remove cultural barriers preventing access to healthcare.

Some researchers believe cultural compentence trainings might promote stereotyping (Kumagai

and Lypson, 2009). A national survey of over 3,000 physicians found that one in five physicians reported not being prepared to work effectively with their patients' sociocultural issues, in particular religious beliefs, mistrust of the Western healthcare system, new immigrants, and healing practices that conflict with conventional medicine (Weissman et al., 2005). Reviews of the most frequently used cultural competence tests found they contained many assumptions, and minimal attention was given to gender, class, geographic location, country of origin, or sexual preference (Kumas-Tan et al. 2007). In several tests, Whiteness was understood and represented as the norm.

The goal of cultural competence is to produce confident, competent healthcare providers with specialized knowledge and skills that can then serve traditionally underserved communities. Other terms such as cultural awareness, cultural knowledge, and cultural sensitivity are often supported by these same assumptions of cultural competence.

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4.4 The Student Experience: When You Represent a Vulnerable Population

Human Services textbooks often focus on the **diversity** represented by clients but neglect the fact that students themselves represent a diversity of experiences and outlooks. This chapter has

looked at providing culturally appropriate services to clients, but what about when you as the student *also* represent a vulnerable population? As an intern, you may be subjected to the biases and

assumptions from colleagues and/or administrators at your agency. You may be the only person of color at the agency, or represent a religious minority. It may be that you are one of few male employees at an agency, or it may simply be that you are younger than any of your colleagues.

Avoiding Tokenism

Jameela was excited to secure an **internship** with an agency that helped immigrants get housed, connect with social services, and complete necessary immigration paperwork. The agency had just begun a program to assist Afghan refugees and had asked Jameela to help. Jameela had been born in the US but was of Afghan heritage. She was excited to learn more and to contribute.

During planning meetings, other agency workers began to ask Jameela for her opinions on the program. At first, Jameela was honored to be included, but she quickly realized that her colleagues (mostly White) were treating her like an expert on Afghan **culture**. She was asked what types of foods they should provide, and what rituals they should observe with the clients. She was asked about Afghan customs, and for information on the Islamic faith. Jameela identified as American and Christian, and she was disappointed that her coworkers had made assumptions about her identity.

Jameela's experience reflects a concept called **tokenism**, where a single individual is seen as representing an entire group. The term tokenism has been in discussion since the 1950s. Martin Luther King Jr. described the minimal efforts at integration as relying on tokenism as an adequate response to real attempts at integration. Malcolm X described the same view:

"Tokenism is hypocrisy. One little student in the University of Mississippi, that's hypocrisy. A handful of students in Little Rock, Arkansas, is hypocrisy. A couple of students going to school in Georgia is hypocrisy. Integration in America is hypocrisy in the rawest form. And the whole world can see it. All this little tokenism that is dangled in front of the Negro and then he's told, 'See what we're doing for you, Tom.' Why the whole world can see that this is nothing but hypocrisy." (X, 1963)

Harvard Business School professor Rosabeth Moss Kanter's 1977 book *Men and Women of the Corporation* explored gender tokenism in the workplace. She stated that representatives of token groups had more visibility and thus pressure to perform. They also experienced discrimination based on stereotypes and assumptions about the group to which they were ascribed.

It can be especially challenging and demoralizing to have this experience as an intern. You may feel particularly powerless to address tokenism, but be aware that this is a well-known and addressable issue. There are several strategies you can try. First, it is important to understand that it may be that you are being seen, intentionally, as representing your group, or it could be that the organization is just beginning to develop a more diverse and inclusive workforce and has not laid all the groundwork for this yet. The experience can be upsetting, but your goal should be increased understanding rather than defensiveness. In a 2018 panel discussion on tokenism at Vanderbilt University, Professor Melissa Thoma-Hunt stated "For those of us who are new to particular spaces, we need to avail ourselves of every opportunity to build relationships. Sometimes it is going to be because of tokenism, but it's what you bring to it (that matters)…so step into it."

One method is to ask your colleagues why they are assuming you know more than they do about a particular group. This may help them identify the **implicit bias** that is influencing their view. You can also be more open about your own background and experiences if you are comfortable sharing those things. You can ask for support and assistance from your supervisor, focusing on how to address and solve the problem. Your classmates and field instructor can be important sources of help and support as well. In the same 2018 panel, Consuela Knox, also from Vanderbilt University, pointed out that "[when] you don't have that diver-sity group or that support that you might need in the job, be sure that you're getting it outside the job. It's important to join these other organizations that are going to empower you outside of your job so you can show up and perform like you should when you're in the workplace."

The Student Experience Licenses and Attributions

4.5 Conclusion

Working with people from a variety of backgrounds and experiences can be one of the most rewarding and challenging parts of human service work. The profession has come a long way in understanding the importance of recognizing and respecting differences, but there is still a lot of work yet to be done. Your **internship** gives you the chance to explore your own views and biases and begin to develop the skills to work effectively across differences. These skills will be integral as you continue in your profession.

Conclusion Licenses and Attributions

4.6 Practice

Journal Prompts

1. After examining the ADDRESSING model in Figure 4.4, reflect on your own identities. Which of your identities represent more power and which represent less power? How might these influence your view of others? What can you do to make sure your work with clients is free from **implicit bias**?

Self Care Activity

1. An effective approach to identifying our implicit biases is to practice mindfulness. Simply staying in the moment can help us tune into our thoughts and respond to situations in an intentional manner rather than relying on automatic responses. One of the easiest methods to become more mindful is focusing on

your breath. The Free Mindfulness Project provides free downloadable exercises on breathing and mindfulness at their **website**. Choose one or two of the exercises to try. Practice one of these techniques while at your **internship**, and see how it impacts your awareness.

Class Discussion Topics

1. Watch the TED Talk "**The Urgency of Inter-sectionality**" by Kimberlé Crenshaw. How would you define **intersectionality**? How do you see it operating in your own life? How do you see it operating at your placement agency? How can you, as interns, address the challenges presented by intersecting identities?

Practice Licenses and Attributions

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Reviewing Your Experience and Planning Ahead

How to Navigate this Book Online

Table of Contents

Every page of this book has a button labeled CONTENTS. In most browsers, this button will be in the upper left corner. You can click anywhere on that button to show the book's table of contents. Clicking the button again hides the table of contents.

In the table of contents, you can click on a chapter title to navigate to the beginning of that chapter.

You can also click on the "+" in the table of contents to see the chapter's sections and navigate directly to that place in the book.

Turning a Page

If you're reading on a larger screen, look at the bottom of the page. There is a button in the lower right corner labeled "Next →" that you can click to move forward, and another button in the lower left corner labeled "← Previous" that you can click to move backward.

Reading on Smaller Screens

On smaller screens, like phones and tablets, the CONTENTS are at the top of the page. Look for the Previous and Next buttons at either the top or bottom of the page.

5.1 Chapter Overview

With this chapter, we take a minute to review the experience you have had so far. By now, you should be more familiar with your agency, the population served, and your role. You may feel overwhelmed with how much you have learned, and you also may be eager to learn more. It can be helpful to reflect on your experience and then use that as a springboard for your goals for the rest of

your **internship**. We also take a moment to talk about how reflection can lead to better **self-care**. Self-care broadly means any activity you participate in that nourishes you physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually. It is vitally important in the human services field. Because our work can be emotionally draining, **burnout** and **compassion fatigue** are unfortunately all too common. Your internship allows you to put self-care practices into place before you fall victim to either of these.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After reading this chapter, you will be able to do the following:
- Assess the connection between your experience in your internship setting and your learning outcomes/internship goals and create new learning goals to enhance the learning process
- Discuss challenges of working with clients, including **transference**, **countertransference**, and **overidentification**
- Identify the possible impact of **documentation** on **diversity**, **equity**, and **inclusion**
- Initiate self-care activities to prevent burnout and compassion fatigue

PREVIEW OF KEY TERMS

- Burnout: the feeling of emotional and/or physical exhaustion brought on by work-related stress.
- Compassion fatigue: the feeling of being unable to respond with empathy or compassion to client issues, usually accompanied by feelings of exhaustion or being overwhelmed.
- Countertransference: a professional's unconscious feelings and behaviors aroused by a client, patient, consumer of services, or even a supervisor. Countertransference is natural and may be positive or negative in its tone. It is often unrelated to the specific client but brought on by some reminder of a previous relationship.
- Documentation: the written record of the interactions between the client and the agency, as well as work done by the agency on the client's behalf. Documentation often exists as part of an agency's official records and may be used for billing purposes.
- Overidentification: the inability to differentiate between one's own life, work, and challenges and those of a client (or clients).
- Self-care: any activity you participate in whose function is to nourish you either physically, mentally, emotionally, or spiritually.
- Toxic Positivity: responding to negative events with a positive or happy affect, regardless of how you actually feel about the situation.

- Transference: a client's unconscious positive or negative feelings or behaviors triggered by another, often the therapist or clinician. The response is often unrelated to the actual professional, but it is due to a previous issue in the client's life.

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5.2 Reviewing Your Experience

By now, you are probably deep into both your academic experience as well as your field experience. It may seem like you don't have a minute to spare between your schoolwork, **internship**, and other outside obligations, such as work, family, and friends. We often get so caught up in our day-to-day tasks that it feels like we barely have time to breathe!

However, reflection is a vital part of the learning process. Reflecting on our experiences can show us where we have made gains and also help us identify areas that we may need to work on. Also, it helps us process our experiences so far, which can prepare us for experiences yet to come.

In addition, reflecting gives us time to think about how we are coping with these new experiences. Working in human services means we are routinely exposed to some of the most painful aspects of the human experience. We also get to experience some of the triumphs as well, but we will not be able to appreciate the highs if we don't learn how to process the lows. Taking periodic breaks to reflect will be critical to our long-term success in the field.

What Have You Learned So Far?

Think back to your first day at your internship. What were you feeling and thinking? Fast-forward to now: What is different about how you feel and think? Reflect on the following questions. You can include your reflections in your journal if you like:

- Make a list of the different tasks or skills that you have learned at your internship site. Which were easier, and which were more challenging? Which ones seem the most important to you at this point in your internship?
- Refer to your learning objectives. Which ones have you completed? Which ones are you still working on? Are there objectives that you have not had the opportunity to begin? What have been the barriers to those objectives?
- What else have you noticed about your agency? How have you interacted with your colleagues? What has your relationship with your supervisor been like? What do you observe about the agency's **culture** and policies? Do the services provided match what you originally expected? Why or why not?

- What are your observations about the population the agency serves? Have your previous beliefs about your clients been challenged? Is the work what you expected?

By reviewing our experience, we can see our progress and identify our ongoing challenges.

Assessing Your Experience

MIDTERM ASSESSMENT OF SKILLS AND EXPERIENCES

By reviewing our experience, we can see our progress and identify our ongoing challenges. Fill out this chart with your assessment of your internship so far. Note if skills or experiences specific to your agency are not listed. Use this chart to discuss your plans with your instructor and classmates.

Skill or Experience	NONE	Not Enough	A Good Balance	Too Much	Excessive Amount
Client Contact (or observation if appropriate)					
Independence					
Documentation					
Supervision					
Colleague Interaction					
Agency Processes					
Networking (with colleagues and professionals from other agencies)					
Collaboration with Other Agencies					
Other:					
Other:					

Figure 5.1 Midterm Assessment

What Do You Still Want To Experience?

After reflecting on the questions in the previous section, what is still missing from your internship experience? What are you hoping to accomplish before your internship ends? These questions and exercises will help you formulate a plan to get the experience you need. You may have to advocate for yourself with your supervisor. A good approach includes the specifics of what you want to accomplish as well as some suggestions for how to make that happen.

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5.3 The Challenges of Working with Clients

Some students have already had volunteer or job experiences that involved working with clients in a human services setting. Many, if not most, have not, so the **internship** may be the first time they experience direct client interactions as a developing professional. It is important to remember that even as a new human services professional, you are participating in this internship to help the clients of the agency and to work with them. While these duties may involve a lot of new responsibilities, it is important to keep in mind that your previous instructors and coursework provided valuable information and knowledge. These resources, along with your own personality, can now be applied to a real-world professional setting and the clients it serves.

At this point in your education, you should have at least some experience working directly with clients. This may include office visits, home visits, or telephone calls. Working with other adults is always challenging, no matter how much experience you have. Human service professionals often describe the work as unpredictable and different every day. While this can be exciting, it can also challenge us. In the following sections, we discuss three of the most common interpersonal issues that can appear when working with clients: **transference**, **countertransference**, and **overidentification**.

Transference and Countertransference

Transference and countertransference are keywords in human services. Both of these terms come from the work of Sigmund Freud but are relevant to professionals regardless of what perspective they follow. Transference involves a client consciously or unconsciously responding to you as a professional in a manner that is based on unresolved conflicts a person has from their past. For instance, if you are in a position of authority and are working with someone who has had conflicts with authority figures in the past, that person may "transfer" their anger or resistance to you.

This transference causes them to react to you in a way you did not intend. Indeed, their reaction often has nothing to do with you as an individual worker. As mentioned, they may feel you represent authority to them. You may remind them of a family member with whom they had a strained relationship. This can result in difficult **communication** patterns that are hard to unravel. It is important to keep in mind that strong or unexpected responses are often not about you, so do not take it personally. Figure 5.1 shows an adult therapist talking to a younger adult client. There could be the risk of the client "transferring" their feelings about their parent or an older sibling onto the therapist.

Figure 5.2 There is always the risk of transference and countertransference in working in a helping relationship. It is important to address it when noticed.

If you also have unresolved issues, then you may project your own issues on your client(s), which is called countertransference. Sometimes, the unresolved issues generate positive feelings, and sometimes they evoke negative ones. For example, if a person resists your authority by treating you negatively, they may be living out unresolved conflicts they have with their parents. If you, as a clinician, "like" a client because they consciously or unconsciously remind you of someone you care for, you may become too attached to them and extend extra time or favors to them at the expense of others.

Knowing and setting **boundaries** are standard ways of managing transference and countertransference in human services settings. Depending on the type of work your agency does, clients do not typically understand this dimension of their interactions with you. One good indicator of negative countertransference between you and a client is that you find them "getting under your skin." Another warning signal is finding yourself thinking about them too much. These signs should remind you to bring up the possibility of transference and countertransference with your supervisor or instructor. Doing that early usually helps avoid unnecessary problems.

This dimension of human services work is important to know about because it also involves unconscious feelings concerning gender, race, social class, age, and so on. For example: Sue, a client you have been working with daily, may not view you as part of the professional staff because you are "only" an intern, and she develops feelings for you. If a client asks for a date, remember to remain professional and establish clear boundaries; be firm but polite in doing so. In Sue's case, you might explain that dating a client is both

unprofessional and prohibited by the agency, and you aren't willing to violate these standards. If the client continues with inappropriate behavior, be sure to bring that up with your supervisor.

When transference and countertransference are at play, **dual relationships** become a risk. Having a relationship with a client outside of the professional relationship is a cause for ethical concern and will be addressed in detail in **Chapter 7**.

Overidentification

Another common issue faced by human service workers is called overidentification. Overidentification is when your sense of empathy is so strong that you lose the boundary between what is your role and responsibility and what belongs to the client. It is critical to be able to empathize with your clients, but you must always be aware of your role as a professional helper.

Overidentification can easily happen when there are similarities that you share with your client. For example: imagine you are working with homeless youth. In your younger years, you spent some time on the streets before finding stable housing again. In fact, you may have been drawn to this work because you had a similar experience. You may have thought, "No one was there for me, so I am going to be there for someone else." Another trigger for overidentification can be if you share a similar cultural background (Urdang,

2010). You may have been recruited for your placement specifically because you share a cultural heritage with the clients.

Overidentification can lead to a loss of objectivity about our work with clients. We may think, "This is how I feel as a Mexican immigrant, therefore, my client must feel the same way." When you overidentify, you risk becoming part of the problem instead of part of the solution. It is important to understand professional boundaries between you and your clients. This is discussed more in the chapter on **ethics**. If you have feelings of overidentification, it is important to ask for help from your supervisor or field instructor. We will talk about how overidentification can lead to **ethical dilemmas** in **Chapter 7**.

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Figure 5.2 Young Woman Talking with Therapist by **Polina Zimmerman** is licensed under the **Pexels License**.

5.4 The Importance of Correct Documentation

Documentation is an important (and often dreaded) part of human service work. Documentation is used for multiple purposes, including case management and billing purposes. Documentation may also be subpoenaed for court proceedings. Documentation helps track our work with

clients and assists other workers who may work with the same client.

Many workers treat documentation as an afterthought—a chore that gets quickly done at the end of the day. It is easy to overlook the importance and implications of not only what you document,

but how you document. When you document information on your client, you create an official record that can be used later for purposes you may not have intended. Therefore, it is essential to be thoughtful about what you write. It can be just as important (if not more so) than what you do.

The Inherent Power of Documentation

It can be easy to overlook the power you have as an intern. There is always a power difference between those providing services and those receiving services. A human service worker is often in a position to decide who gets services and what services they receive. Even if you, as the worker, do not feel in a position of power, clients will generally assume you have some power in the decision-making process. This power differential has existed since helping became professionalized in the 1880s–1890s. While helping existed in many forms and in many cultures before then, helping started to be recognized as a profession when educated women (mostly White) began developing programs that followed specific guidelines that outlined how clients were served. One of the lasting ideas from that time is that workers are meant to designate between "deserving" and "undeserving" clients. So, even if we do not feel particularly powerful, our clients will always attribute us with power. They will often assume we can decide between offering services or ending services, even if that is not in our job description.

This power differential is most significant in the arena of documentation. Modern social services still exist in the shadow of the white supremacy **culture** in which it was developed. The history of human services includes ideas of helping people "fit in" or adapt to the norms of the dominant culture. Two of the tenets of this cultural bias still endure in documentation. These tenets are perfectionism and the written word (Okun, 2021).

Perfectionism can be reflected in how much we rely on accurate documentation. There is more focus on pointing out what's wrong rather than what is right. This may also feed into the observations that you document. You may have an excellent home visit with an elderly person and their caregiver but then only document the negative issues you observed.

The power of the written word is what has driven human services documentation from the very beginning. I was trained early in my career by my first supervisor that "if you don't document it, it didn't happen." Written notes are more highly valued than personal interactions, and most agencies stick to a highly structured format. Not complying with the agency system can result in your work being devalued. Usually, the format focuses on the problems or challenges faced by the client rather than their strengths. In a system that focuses on the written word, you can change the future for your client simply by checking a box.

Put yourself in the position of Sunny, an intern working in child welfare. She has been asked to supervise a custody visit between a mother and her 7-year-old son. During the visit, the son does not make eye contact with his mother and is rather quiet. The mother focuses almost solely on the child's schoolwork and grades. She inquires repeatedly about whether his foster parents are making him do his homework and checking his answers. Before leaving, she reminds him not to let his grades slip, or his father will be very disappointed. Sunny documents that the child seemed disengaged from his mother and uncomfortable in her presence. Meanwhile, the mother did not ask about her son's emotional well-being and did not engage in any play. Sunny notes that the mother's last statement to her son could be interpreted as a threat of consequences for his behavior.

Think about the above situation. At first glance, it may appear that Sunny has done an appropriate job documenting concrete observations. Now add the following details:

- Sunny is from a rowdy Italian-American family that expressed love through physical play and affection. Her mother focused on feeding her children and ensuring their happiness. While education was deemed important, her parents rarely punished or rewarded their children for grades.
- The family being observed are immigrants from East Asia. Their goal in coming to the U.S. was to give their children the opportunity for success and stability not available to them. They believe a good education is their son's pathway out of poverty. In their culture, children are meant to be obedient and deferential to their parents.

Does this added information change your assessment? How often do we overlook cultural differences that may influence our view? For Sunny, she probably believes she was raised in a "normal" family. For the mother and son, they probably believe their interaction is also perfectly "normal."

Let's return to Sunny. She documents the visit and goes on with her day. The case manager sees her note and evaluates the interaction based on her own majority culture background. She becomes concerned that the mother does not understand how to appropriately interact with her child. She recommends mandatory parenting classes and parental coaching. The classes conflict with the mother's work schedule, so she does not go. The mother is held in contempt and is threatened with **termination** of her parental rights.

Our case notes can have lasting implications on a client. If our documentation misses critical elements, it is vulnerable to misinterpretation by other workers or agencies involved in the situation. A careless reference to "anger issues" could follow a client through the system for years.

As Kwame Onwuachi (2019) observes in his biography *Notes from a Young Black Chef*, in grade school, he and his best friend were often pulling pranks and misbehaving. His friend, who was white, would be told, "I'm worried about you getting in more trouble." In the same situation, Kwame was told, "You are a troublemaker." He felt like this label followed him from year to year, causing the adults around him to prejudge him in a way that his friend was not judged. We may think our case notes are unimportant, but they may have an impact for years.

Checking Your Assumptions

As McDonald and colleagues (2015) note:

> Significantly—and this is not always sufficiently understood by novice or even experienced social workers—those **social work** reports do more than "communicate." They also have the power, long past their original purpose, to shape the lives of people (D'Cruz, 2004). Social work reports not only address their intended audiences in a particular (and perhaps local) organization for a specific purpose in the immediate present, but they also have the potential to reach unintended, unforeseen audiences in entirely unpredictable circumstances across vast geographies of space, even many decades later.

So, if we know the dangers of poor documentation, how do we change this? There are many different topics and styles to be aware of, and we list some resources at the end of the chapter. However, two of the most important processes are self-awareness and specificity.

Self-awareness is a type of cultural knowledge rooted in an understanding of our own cultural background. If we are unaware of how our background shapes our worldview, we are susceptible to applying our biased lens to others. What we view as "normal" is often colored by our own history and experiences. Be aware of thinking "Everyone knows…" or "The right thing to do is…"

For example, I come from an Irish-American background. In my family, humor and laughter were used to cope with almost any situation, whether happy or sad. The saying in our household was, "It's either laugh or cry." Growing up, I assumed everyone coped in the same manner. As my goal was to work with dying patients and their families, it is exceedingly lucky that I was made aware of this cultural assumption before I began working in the field. I can only imagine how mortifying it would have been to make an inappropriate attempt at humor with a family unprepared for that.

Specificity means using as specific language as possible when describing a situation or a client.

When discussing a client's culture, use the exact culture (Mexican-American, Cuban-American) rather than a blanket label (Latin American). When describing gender identity, use the identity and pronouns used by your specific client. Instead of describing someone as "poor," use a specific socioeconomic indicator, such as current household income. Be aware that the words you use to describe the situation need to be as clear and free of bias as possible to help prevent them from being misread and misinterpreted. A great resource for inclusive language is the American Psychological Association's **General Principles for Reducing Bias**.

Case Study: The Importance of Specificity

Here's an example of using specificity. Describe what you see in the following picture (figure 5.3).

Figure 5.3 What does this kitchen look like to you?

Now, review what you wrote. Did you include the terms messy, dirty, or unclean? What descriptors did you use? Now, think about how a different worker might view your note. Will they be able to review this kitchen given your description? If they are following up on a complaint, can they tell if the kitchen is different than when you visited? If you are able, compare your description with those of other students. How do they vary? How would you interpret their description? How would they interpret yours?

Specificity will allow other readers the ability to understand the scene and compare it to their own experience.

The Importance of Correct Documentation Licenses and Attributions

5.5 The Relationship Between Self-Care and Burnout

You have probably heard the term "**burnout**" already in your human services education. Burnout is a "prolonged response to chronic emotional and interpersonal stressors on the job leading to a combination of physical and emotional exhaustion" (Martin et al., 2020).

Human services workers are vulnerable to burnout by the very nature of our job. We often work with our clients during some of the worst times of their lives. We are exposed almost daily to the "emotional and interpersonal stressors" of our clients. Combined with other issues related to productivity and the pressure we may put on ourselves to be able to "solve" our clients' problems, burnout is a very real risk.

Now that you have some experience with an agency, you may have seen some symptoms of burnout in other workers in the field. In fact, you may already be feeling some of the symptoms of burnout yourself! In this section, we will discuss the relationship between burnout and **compassion fatigue** and how appropriate **self-care** can help prevent or combat these issues.

What Are Burnout, Compassion Fatigue, and Self-Care?

Most of us who have worked in the field for any length of time have felt some burnout symptoms at different times in our careers. Symptoms of burnout can include:

- Physical symptoms such as exhaustion and headaches
- Emotional symptoms such as hopelessness, despair, anger, and depression
- Psychosocial symptoms such as a lack of connection with others

When we are feeling burned out, it is similar to the feeling of "running on empty." We have used everything we have in our emotional and physical gas tank, and we are about to stutter to a stop.

Burnout can lead to another issue called compassion fatigue. Compassion fatigue is a "state of significant depletion or exhaustion of the store of compassion, resulting from repeated empathic and sympathetic responses to pain and distress in patients and in loved ones" (Martin et al., 2020). This means that we literally find ourselves too emotionally exhausted to feel empathy or compassion for others.

Compassion fatigue may be limited to our clients but often also involves our colleagues,

classmates, and loved ones. Many people describe compassion fatigue as feeling "numb" or as if there is a glass wall between them and the rest of the world. They can observe a situation and know intellectually how they would or should feel but simply do not have the capacity to connect with those feelings. We may want to feel compassion and empathy towards others but find ourselves unable to respond appropriately. For more details on burnout and compassion fatigue, check out the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's article on **Compassion Fatigue and Self-Care for Crisis Counselors**.

There are several reasons why human services professionals are prone to burnout. Because our profession is built upon empathy and genuine connection, we are literally using our "selves" as a tool in our work. This obviously can be very taxing. Also, some agencies have a focus on productivity. They may have expectations that caseworkers make X number of home visits a day or that a worker contacts all of their clients each month. This can create a sense of urgency that is not sustainable.

There is also the risk of seeing your work as that of a "savior" or a "martyr." We may get the idea that if we don't help our clients, no one will (or no one can). Our clients might even encourage this attitude, saying you are the only one who has been able to help them so far. This may end up with you working extra hours or thinking about your clients 24 hours a day. My advice to new workers has often been, "If you think you are the only person who can help, then you are already on the road to burnout."

Self-care can include any activities that help you regain a sense of balance or connection. This can include many different techniques, including physical activity, socializing, or quiet reflection. The critical aspect of self-care is that the activity helps *you* feel more hopeful and re-energized. What those methods are will depend on your own style and preferences. Some people find spending time with family and friends helpful; others prefer a quiet, solo walk in nature.

It is important to note that there are some activities—such as drinking or smoking—that may provide a sense of relief in the short term but will not be useful in the long run. It is vital that the activities you choose are not destructive to you and provide support that can be maintained over time. Stop for a moment and think about what you have done in the past to help you cope with stressful situations. What positive strategies do you already practice when under stress?

It is also important to distinguish self-care from **toxic positivity**. Toxic positivity involves responding to negative events or situations with a positive (or "happy") attitude, regardless of your actual internal response. This tactic short-circuits people's authentic emotional response and can come across (and feel) like a lack of empathy.

Self-care is not about engaging in an activity in order to "see the positive" or to ignore existing sad or distressed feelings. However, there are many ad campaigns for products or "self-care" programs that project this exact message (figure 5.4).

Figure 5.4 Toxic positivity is not the same as self-care.

To illustrate the destructiveness of toxic positivity, imagine you find out a client has died in a car accident. Toxic responses include statements like "S/he's in a better place now," "Focus on your other clients, and you'll feel better," or "Let's go do a yoga class—it will help you let go of the negativity." Healthier responses could include, "That sounds upsetting. Do you want to talk about it?" or "What can I do that would be helpful?"

Self-help tips can often include an element of toxic positivity. Beware of tips or programs or products that guarantee a positive result. Many tips found on the internet focus more on ignoring or covering up feelings rather than expressing them. There can also be an element of victim-blaming—"If you feel overwhelmed, it is your fault. Just breathe/take probiotics/meditate/etc., and you will feel better." Also, many of these pro-

grams are from for-profit companies that survive on getting people to feel they "need" their products.

There are two main problems with this approach. First, the same method will not work for all people. As mentioned previously, the important thing about self-care is that it works for *you*. The second problem is that it often feels like the goal is to feel better, and if it doesn't work, it's better to act positive and cover up your feelings than admit you are still struggling. As we discuss self-care, keep in mind that it is very individualized, and you may have to conduct some trial and error to find methods that work for you.

(For an interesting example of this, consider watching this 20-minute video: "The Toxic World of Self-Help: Hustle **Culture**, Toxic Positivity, Addiction and Fake Gurus" **https://www.youtube.com/ watch?v=dmLTLkCBSN8**.)

Creating Self-Care Goals and Strategies

As a new intern in the human services field, you may not have had to focus on self-care related to your work in the past. In human service work, it is a given that the work can be physically and emotionally draining. The field has become increasingly aware of the importance of teaching students about self-care while they are new in the field as a method of helping prevent burnout and compassion fatigue in the first place.

Creating self-care goals and strategies includes identifying what the stressors are for you in your placement. You can also include current stressors in your life that may be impacting your ability to cope at your agency. Your self-care goals need to be manageable and tailored to fit your individual needs.

A common self-care goal is to be able to let go of issues related to clients at the end of the workday, and not take the stress and distraction with you into your personal life. This can be challenging for the most experienced worker! Your strategy for addressing this needs to be something that you can realistically accomplish, and that helps you achieve this goal. Some strategies include:

- Review your work day on the drive home, and then focus on what you will do when you get home
- Close your work computer at a specific time, and do not open it until your next workday
- Do not link your **internship** email to your personal cell phone
- Stop to engage in one of your preferred self-care activities on the way home, such as going to the gym, attending a support group, or attending a spiritual practice.

It can be helpful to discuss these issues with your supervisor, your instructor, your colleagues, and your classmates. They may have helpful ideas that can start you down the right path.

The Relationship Between Self-Care and Burnout Licenses and Attributions

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Figure 5.4 "**Good vibes only**" by Ukulijehovah-nis on Wikimedia Commons is licensed under **CC-BY SA 4.0**.

5.6 Conclusion

This chapter has given you a chance to review your progress and make plans for the future. After reading this chapter, hopefully it is clear to you that **documentation** and **self-care** are essential parts of our work that should not be overlooked. Armed with a better understanding of each, you can apply this information during the rest of your **internship**.

Conclusion Licenses and Attributions

5.7 Practice

Journal Prompts

1. Review your experience so far. What has been most rewarding? What are you still hoping to experience? How will you accomplish these goals?

Self-Care Activity

1. Take the Self-Compassion Test at **https://self-compassion.org/**. Based on your scores, explore the resources on the rest of the site. Pick two guided exercises or practices to try out in the coming week. These exercises aim to help you be more forgiving of yourself, which can help combat **toxic positivity**. (Remember that if this doesn't seem to work for you—it's not your fault! This is just one strategy for **self-care**.)

Class Discussion Prompts

1. In small groups, discuss the following topics regarding your own **internship** so far:
   1. How much independence have you been given? Does this feel like the right amount?
   2. What have been the high points? Have you had some low points?
   3. What are your plans for the rest of your internship?
   4. What would you still like to cover in class?
2. As a class, develop a list of self-care goals that seem common to several students. Then, brainstorm possible strategies for addressing this goal.
3. The pedagogical element, "The Importance of Specificity," can also be used for class discussion.

Practice Licenses and Attributions

5.8 References

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Getting the Most Out of Supervision

How to Navigate this Book Online

Table of Contents

Every page of this book has a button labeled CONTENTS. In most browsers, this button will be in the upper left corner. You can click anywhere on that button to show the book's table of contents. Clicking the button again hides the table of contents.

In the table of contents, you can click on a chapter title to navigate to the beginning of that chapter.

You can also click on the "+" in the table of contents to see the chapter's sections and navigate directly to that place in the book.

Turning a Page

If you're reading on a larger screen, look at the bottom of the page. There is a button in the lower right corner labeled "Next →" that you can click to move forward, and another button in the lower left corner labeled "← Previous" that you can click to move backward.

Reading on Smaller Screens

On smaller screens, like phones and tablets, the CONTENTS are at the top of the page. Look for the Previous and Next buttons at either the top or bottom of the page.

6.1 Chapter Overview

This chapter provides a look at the relationship between you and your supervisor at the **internship** site. Along with their other professional responsibilities, this individual may be the director of the agency, a department head, or simply a staff member whose duties include helping interns learn about the work along with all their other professional responsibilities. For our purposes, the supervisor is the person who works with you most at the agency. The supervisor is generally the one with whom the instructor communicates about your performance or evaluations. This chapter also discusses setting goals for an intern-

ship, managing conflicting goals should they arise, and understanding the purpose of assessment.

Internships are an efficient and effective way of learning because they provide professional guidance. Often, supervisors can work one-on-one with you in ways that are compatible with your learning style, which is more difficult to achieve in a classroom environment. Although coursework gives you an idea of what to expect, it is the guided experience that turns theory into knowledge and knowledge into ability. This **fieldwork** setting is like a laboratory where you can test ideas and techniques without, hopefully, your experiment "blowing up" in your or your client's face. Similarly, supervised experience allows you to test theoretical concepts and perspectives in a real-world environment and determine which techniques work best. The supervisory experience provides you with a model for developing your own style as a helping professional; the challenges and opportunities you encounter during the internship process can help you clarify your goals and understand how to use constructive feedback for professional development.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After reading this chapter, you will be able to do the following:
- Develop your own goals for supervision
- Describe the elements of professional supervision
- Formulate a plan for a successful supervisory relationship
- Exhibit the ability to incorporate feedback and advocate for oneself

PREVIEW OF KEY TERMS

- Constructive criticism: feedback designed to help the listener improve their performance.
- Learning agreement: the contract created by the field instructor, the student, and the supervisor that outlines the student's learning outcomes for the term.
- Managing up: the practice of using the traits of the identified leader to help you be productive.
- Self-advocacy: the ability to speak up for one's desires and needs.
- Supervisory style: the manner in which a supervisor is most comfortable interacting with interns.

Chapter Overview Licenses and Attributions

6.2 Reviewing Your Goals

In **Chapter 2**, we discussed the importance of well-written goals and a **learning agreement**. Now is the time to revisit these goals and ensure you are on track. Let's use the goal we discussed in chapter two: "My goal is to manage the referral desk for five hours, one day a week, to become familiar with local resources for ten weeks." Now that it is a few weeks into your **internship**, you may be finding it hard to complete this goal. It may be that other people are already scheduled to cover the desk, and they state that they don't need help. It may be that you get pulled away from this task to help on other projects. Having your learning contract and original goals handy will help you discuss this with your supervisor. You can bring up this issue with your supervisor by explaining that you are finding it difficult to meet your goals. By being specific and referring back to the learning contract, you are giving your supervisor information they can use to help solve the problem. Communicating with your supervisor will be crucial to your success (figure 6.1).

Figure 6.1 What comes to mind when you think about "supervision"? Would you prefer a formal sit-down meeting, or is stopping by your desk to chat enough?

When You're Not Moving Forward

Often, a supervisor will help set up a work schedule but then become too busy to adjust it in ways that lead to increasing degrees of training and skill acquisition. Consider this situation: Mohamed was working at a busy mental health facility and found himself underutilized. Mohamed's supervisor set up a supervision schedule but often canceled the meeting and stopped by Mohamed's desk at different times during the week. Mohamed began to feel like they were just keeping him busy with mundane tasks to meet the hours required.

If you, like Mohamed, feel the internship has lost its sense of direction, or you are not progressing, it is crucial to think about how you want to move forward. Instead of complaining to the supervisor, consider presenting them with a plan

that would move you toward your goals or increase your level of responsibility or involvement. If you have trouble formulating a plan, share your situation with your instructor or classmates since they are part of your network and can act as resources to help you generate possible solutions.

In the situation described above, Mohamed felt frustrated he wasn't learning as much as he'd hoped. Since he was interested in community work, he proposed creating a book of community services that people can use to find assistance with housing, transportation, utility services, job training, food, childcare, and so on. He created a set of Facebook pages listing basic human services, names to contact, phone numbers to use, and active links for clients to contact resources directly. The supervisor valued his contribution enough to assign someone to maintain the site even after Mohamed graduated.

When You've Met Your Goals

Some interns reach the point where they feel they have met the goals in the original learning agreement and have time to do more. Of course, it is wise to make sure you have met those goals before discussing the situation with your supervisor. Take a moment to make sure all expectations have been met, and then create a goal or set of them that would help you grow while also offering value to the agency. Next, approach the supervisor with a tentative plan. If the supervisor feels you are ready, and if you no longer need to continue to perform your current duties, you can take the next step in your professional development.

Every person with whom you have contact may be a source of education and opportunity. Getting to know others within the agency allows you to discuss career interests with them and learn about career possibilities associated with their roles at the agency. For example, you could offer to help others in their work or create new tasks to take

things into your own hands when there is nothing to do or when your jobs have become routine. Taking the initiative to learn about the agency and the services it provides often makes a good impression and opens new doors. One intern, Rosetta, worked at a substance abuse center. In her downtime, she researched other agencies in surrounding counties because she saw that clients often move from county to county. Consequently, Rosetta identified, compiled, and printed out a list of AA/NA meeting schedules for each county so clients would have the opportunity to continue to attend meetings after they moved.

Learning Agreements and Contracts

Your college, the placement site, or both may have certain legal obligations or routine requirements that must be met. One of them, for example, may be the need for a formal legal agreement between your educational institution and the placement site. Another one could be a written plan detailing who you will be working with, what duties you will be performing while at the site, and the learning objectives you, the site, and your instructor feel are essential for you to master.

One of the most empowering ways to achieve your goals is to draw up an internship or learning agreement. A learning agreement is often developed in written form so that the college, agency, supervisor, and student are all quite literally on the same page in regard to expected duties, requirements, and objectives. Another benefit of a written agreement is that it allows you to track progress and provides your standing if the agency points you in directions you did not intend or agree to go. In other words, these agreements are better handled by spelling them out on paper so that they can be used as a guide to help create a good internship plan and to maintain this focus throughout the internship experience. In this sense, the internship

agreement is like a contract that you may refer to throughout the process.

Here's an example of what a learning agreement could include:

- your expected duties
- your work hours
- your supervisor

When creating your learning agreement, use the SMART goal strategy discussed earlier in this chapter. This contract may also spell out limitations to the student's activities and who will provide liability insurance for the student while on site. If these matters are not spelled out, you should talk to both the supervisor and your instructor about them.

Clear contracts provide the foundations for a rewarding internship experience. Consequently, your goals will also be reviewed by supervisors and agencies who will have some sound ideas and suggestions regarding your expectations and limitations. Sometimes, they even see more potential in an intern than the student does. This situation can create the opportunity to grow beyond your expectations.

Accordingly, sometimes it is best to modify an agreement. In that case, changes should be approved by the intern, the supervisor, and the instructor. Occasionally, a college or site will not

use a contract but have only a verbal agreement with the intern. Although this situation isn't the best, at least you can document what you agree to do, and not do, and then discuss that with your instructor.

Although rare, sometimes an internship does not work out well for a variety of reasons. For example, there may be a sudden change in supervisors or insurmountable interpersonal conflicts. Though no one wants to see things go in this direction, I've found alternatives, sometimes even a new site, without penalizing the student. Your instructor may also find helpful ways of dealing with this situation if you bring it up to them.

Reviewing Your Goals Licenses and Attributions

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Figure 6.1 Photo by **AllGo – An App For Plus Size People** on **Unsplash**.

6.3 Establishing the Supervisory Relationship

Every supervisor is unique in that each has their own clinical and **supervisory style**. A skilled supervisor will teach, guide, and sometimes even mentor you to better prepare you for your future in the field. However, even the best supervisors may not always be as accessible as you would like, so be patient when necessary.

Remember, they have many responsibilities at the site, including overseeing your work. Supervising your growth is an additional duty, not one that replaces another. While it is most desirable to have a supervisor with qualities and teaching methods that mesh well with your style, sometimes those styles may conflict with one another. To solve conflicts in general, practice good **com-**

munication skills and be willing to find common ground. In this situation, the same relational dynamics that you have experienced with differing supervisory styles in the past may help here. For example, if you find yourself in an **internship** site with supervision difficulties, try not to get discouraged. Also, seeing things from different perspectives can help. Finally, your colleagues and instructors can help you during class meetings or office hours. You may find that you are not alone when facing such a challenge.

Your peers may even help you understand the strengths and weaknesses of your learning style, as well as those of the supervisor. Your instructor and classmates can also help you develop ideas on how to improve or at least better deal with the situation.

Keep in mind your supervisor has their own personality and supervisory style, too. Generally, supervisors are happy to help because they want to see you succeed. After all, they became professionals for the same reason most of us do: to have the opportunity to help others. However, a supervisor may occasionally have a difficult problem or be dealing with a stressful day and seem irritable or even short-tempered because of it. No matter what kind of day it is, do your best job. Remember, although your supervisor's style may irritate you, it is not your role to change it. It is, however, your job to learn how to deal with different styles, which means that this situation can be a learning opportunity.

Having a difficult supervisor can be challenging, but it is valuable for learning about different styles and how to cope with them. These skills are likely to come in handy in the future. This type of awareness can be an essential skill that can be carried throughout your entire career, so even a poor supervisor may turn out to be a good one in the long run, even if it is only to show what not to do! After all, there is no guarantee that you will always have a good supervisor or boss.

Everyone has communication and relational styles. See figure 6.2 for common examples of how these styles appear in the supervisory relationship. Each one is accompanied by its strengths and weaknesses.

Supervisory Styles	Description
Over-involved	Manifested by micromanaging or sometimes by being "buddies." Over-involved supervisors often feel the need to check your work for accuracy to feel comfortable.
Controlling	Needing to demonstrate they are in charge, demanding perfection, having strict rules, and showing a low tolerance for individuality. A controlling supervisor will usually feel that rule-following is more important than individual preferences.
Hands-off	An attitude of letting things take their own course without interfering. May appear under-involved, offering little direction. These supervisors often feel like they are doing their best to help you by staying out of your way and letting you learn on your own.
Authoritative	Knowledgeable, appropriately assertive, and open to suggestions when appropriate. This supervisor understands their role in guiding you, giving suggestions and assistance, and listening to your ideas.

Figure 6.2 Different supervisors may have different approaches to working with interns.

It may be helpful to try to identify your style and that of your supervisor so that you are better equipped to make appropriate adjustments when necessary (figure 6.3).

Student Styles	Description
Passive	Accepting or allowing what happens to happen. Tends to avoid active input, responses, or resistance. This intern may view the workplace as a classroom and wait until the "teacher" (their supervisor) tells them what to do.
Aggressive	Pursuing one's interests too forcefully, sometimes unduly so, or without listening to others. This often comes across as being overly confident in their knowledge and unwilling to work with others.
Assertive	Having and showing a confident, energetic, goal-oriented approach. This student is able to respond flexibly and accept feedback.
Realistic	A person who accepts a situation as it is and is prepared to make the best out of the circumstances. This student may give up trying to achieve their goals if difficulties arise.

Figure 6.3 Different students will also bring their own individual styles to the relationship.

Setting the Structure

The site supervisor plays an essential role in a successful internship experience. You can do several things to increase the chances of a positive relationship. Simple actions, such as being prepared and being courteous, can go a long way to help this process. For example, showing up on time and actively listening to your supervisor show that you value their time and expertise. Trying your best to stick to the established schedule is vital because supervisors, and sometimes even clients, count on you being there at the appointed times.

Still, life is complicated, and unexpected events, such as sudden illness, bad weather, family emergencies, and so on, may happen. It is important to set a regular schedule and avoid schedule changes or problems as much as possible. However, it is a good idea to have a backup plan in place. For instance, if you have children or caretaker responsibilities, then having alternative arrangements made with someone in advance can help. If your work schedule changes, give the site or the supervisor as much advance notice as possible. Above all, avoid simply not showing up. While most supervisors are understanding, you alone are accountable for your decisions. Requesting a day off for an activity is significantly better than calling off at the last moment or just not showing up.

Some people look at the time requirements of the internship and its schedule as an intrusion because of family, school, or employment responsibilities. However, sometimes it is possible to coordinate schedules in advance. For example, many schools have spring breaks that may make it possible for you to increase hours at the internship site, which reduces their impact on the rest of the semester. If the time is supervised, working weekends may be possible at some sites, such as a residential program. This type of schedule balancing or time management also facilitates the development of a good working relationship with those at your site, and it fosters a sense of working *with* someone as opposed to working *for* someone.

The ability to settle into a routine quickly helps facilitate movement through the developmental stages of the internships. Supervisors and other coworkers know you are there to learn. They want you to feel included and part of the agency or team. If you are shy, keep in mind that many others have been through the same experience, including the people you work with. After all, they were interns or beginners at one time, just like you. Rosetta, mentioned earlier, volunteered to

help facilitate support groups on evenings and weekends. This was a huge help for the full-time staff and allowed Rosetta to focus on her school schedule during the day.

Agreeing to the Goals of Supervision

As noted previously, each supervisor and student bring their own strengths and challenges to the relationship. Be clear with your supervisor about what you hope to get out of the time spent in supervision. The areas in which agreement is key include the following:

- meeting frequency
- meeting duration
- meeting participants
- meeting agendas

Meeting frequency and duration

While there is no "one size fits all" model of super-vision, an agreement on some of the basics is key. While some programs establish the minimum supervision schedule, some leave it up to the student and supervisor. For consistent supervision, make a plan to meet with your supervisor at least twice a month. This ensures your progress and gives you both a time to discuss issues before they might become bigger concerns. Your supervisor won't know your needs unless you are clear about them. If you need more (or less) supervision, ask for a 1:1 meeting with your supervisor to discuss the situation.

Meeting participants

When an agency has more than one student interning at the same time, group supervision may be used as part of the supervisory structure. Group supervision can be an opportunity for interns to get to know one another and learn from each other. You may realize other interns are dealing with similar issues and have already come up with some solutions. It can also enhance a sense of camaraderie among the interns, increasing their support network. While group supervision does offer benefits, this format works best when it alternates with individual sessions so that each intern gets one-on-one time with the supervisor.

Meeting agendas

It is also essential to discuss how meetings will be run and what will be covered. Some supervisors will come with a specific agenda to address; others will be more like "no news is good news." If you are unsure how to prepare for the meeting, you will not be able to get the most out of the time. Refer back to the supervisory and student styles in figures 6.3 and 6.4. If we have a "hands-off" supervisor and a "passive" student, the supervision meetings may end up a waste of time. On the other hand, combine an "authoritative" supervisor with an "aggressive" student, and you're heading for trouble! Misunderstandings can be avoided by discussing the format and expectations ahead of time. Some supervisors prefer interns to bring particular concerns to the meeting, while others prefer a more open-ended style. By clarifying expectations, you can be ready to get the most out of your time together.

Establishing the Supervisory Relationship Licenses and Attributions

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6.4 Challenges of Supervision

You may encounter problems reaching some of your goals during the **internship**. Typical issues include not feeling you are learning as much as you expected, feeling lost, or feeling like a burden. Such problems can be discussed with the supervisor, professor, and classmates. Classmates and professors are outstanding resources and can be used as information tools for self-monitoring and reflection during the internship. They may help you find ways to make the experience more satisfying. Often, people use role-playing scenarios in the classroom to help deal with a problem concerning one's supervisor or a given staff worker. The goal of a good "working alliance" with your supervisor is to create an atmosphere where both of you feel free to talk to one another honestly.

Sometimes, students find themselves feeling like they are not getting the type of experience they expected. For instance, their priorities or goals may have been pushed aside or their work at the agency has become routine. These situations arise for several reasons, most of which are not the students' fault. For example, it could be the agency's busy season is at another time of the year, or the funding streams have changed in ways that make original agreements impossible. It is vital to continue to advocate for your learning, even if the situation has changed. Many students found themselves in this predicament when the COVID-19 pandemic shifted the way services were provided. The most successful outcomes involved the student and supervisor working together to adapt to the changing environment. Some of these examples are listed later in the chapter.

In general, the agency's priorities come first, so the intern needs to adjust, not the other way around. The professor and your peers can help you adjust your goals or find new ways of meeting them during the remainder of the internship. Brainstorming ideas may help you know how to approach the supervisor, find other alternatives to meet your goals, and restructure your goals.

Challenges can arise when your goals do not match your assigned work. Jane was interning at a crisis center and had the goal of working face-to-face with clients in crisis. Unfortunately, since starting her internship, she was unable to sit in on an intake session for various reasons not of her making. Instead, Jane's work was focused on organizing paperwork and making copies for her supervisor. While Jane understood the importance of the work she was doing, she feared she would go through the entire internship missing out on other valuable experiences. Jane discussed her concerns in the classroom, and classmates encouraged her to have a discussion with her supervisor. Jane then made some suggestions to the supervisor about how to include more client contact into her routine without dumping all the paperwork

on someone else. The supervisor tweaked the suggestions a bit, and together they found a strategy that met Jane's goal of increasing her clinical skills with clients in crisis while still meeting the clerical needs of the agency. It is important to come to a meeting or discussion with options to solve the issue rather than just a complaint. This shows you are invested in achieving your goals and not just waiting for someone else to take charge.

In Focus: Setting Goals During a Pandemic

During the spring of 2020, many students were finishing their year of supervised internship and looking forward to increased opportunities and responsibilities that spring term. As we all know, most social services agencies closed their offices for at least a few weeks that spring while everyone tried to figure out the best approach to provide services during a global pandemic. Students struggled to figure out how to complete their hours when they could no longer go into the office or visit clients at their homes. Through creative thinking by the supervisors, the students, and the instructors, students were able to finish their internships in a variety of manners, including:

- working remotely on projects such as gathering resources or outlining new projects
- connecting with clients via phone to offer services
- continuing to work in the office while masked and observing social distancing
- completing training modules in specific areas, such as trauma-informed care

Students were able to complete their internships in novel but rewarding ways. Another example came in the spring of 2021, when three interns were working on an outreach program focused on decreasing loneliness in older adults living in rural areas. When vaccines became available, all three interns pivoted their goals to help staff phone banks, calling those same elderly clients and getting them scheduled for a vaccine. It is important to be flexible and look for opportunities when your plans get disrupted.

Sometimes, interns reach the point where they feel they have met the goals that were set down in the original **learning agreement** and have time to do more. Of course, it is wise to make sure you have met those goals before discussing the situation with your supervisor. Take a moment to make sure all expectations have been met, and then try creating a goal or set of them that would help you grow while also offering something of value to the agency. Next, approach the supervisor with a tentative plan. If the supervisor feels you are ready, and if there is no longer a need for you to continue to perform your current duties, you may be able to take the next step in your professional development.

Handling Feedback and Constructive Criticism

A good supervisor will regularly assess your ability to take on new tasks. However, it is important for interns to evaluate themselves from time to time as well. Most interns will want to review their objectives periodically and conduct reflective self-assessments. This process can be done informally or through keeping a journal, a file on a computer or phone, and so on. Near the end of the internship, the instructor often requests the supervisor do a final report, **evaluation**, or summary of the student and their performance at the site.

Of course, you are likely to have a general feel about how things are going based on the supervisor's reactions or meetings regarding your work performance. So, if the internship does not seem to be allowing your goals to be met, requesting time for a meeting before the semester is over can prevent problems. Regardless of how challenging the tasks may be, always do your best work. If you take pride in your work, coworkers and supervisors will notice. Remember, these people are now in your network. When it comes to future jobs, they could be potential references.

No two interns will progress at the same rate. Sometimes, interns feel they are not given the freedom to develop more fully. Other times, they may feel they were asked to do too much. You may look at the situation and feel discouraged or lose **confidence** in your abilities. If this happens, discuss this reaction with your supervisor and ask for suggestions for improvement.

Constructive criticism is a crucial component of this process, as is being able to hear and accept such feedback. Try your best to listen, but also realize the supervisor is looking at the bigger agency picture that you cannot see. In situations where it seems that the supervisor and staff are talking about you in a way that does not feel good, be sure not to jump to any conclusions. It may be tempting to overgeneralize, personalize, and surrender to emotional reasoning (refer to figures 6.4 and 6.5). After all, they may be discussing progress as well as the lack of it and your potential rather than your limitations. Here are some common patterns we use to jump to conclusions and ways to resist this habit.

Common Cognitive Distortions	Example	How to Combat This Pattern
Overgenerationization: Taking one fact and applying it to everything	"My supervisor corrected my **documentation**. I can't do anything right!"	Focus on the specifics: "This is helping my documentation skills."
Personalizing: Believing you are responsible for everyone else's actions	"My supervisor is in a bad mood because she's mad at me."	Expand Your Focus: "The agency is very busy right now and there are many reasons my supervisor might be stressed."
Emotional Reasoning: Basing your judgment of a situation solely on how you are feeling about it	"I feel like I did an awful job with that client, so that means I did do an awful job."	Separate Emotions from Facts: "That client interview did not go well, but parts of it were fine."

Figure 6.4 This table provides common responses to constructive criticism.

If you feel that the discussions are taking place in a negative way, or if it seems that the problem is a personality conflict you are having with the supervisor or their style, it is advisable to talk with your instructor about it. After all, the instructor is the individual who oversees your internship and who has the responsibility to make sure it is progressing properly. It is also likely the instructor is more interested in your professional development than anything else.

Figure 6.5 It is important to be open to feedback without jumping to irrational thoughts.

Asking for What You Need

As this chapter shows, the value of supervision relies on lots of factors, including the agency, the work, and the goals and personality of both the student and the supervisor. Due to these factors, there could be a mismatch between the experience you were expecting and the experience you are having. You may think others are aware of the problem and ignoring it, but often your supervisor and instructor are not as aware of the issue as you are. An essential skill in this situation is **self-advocacy**. This means being comfortable asking for what you need in your placement and in supervision. There are several ways to go about this.

Remember, your college or university instructor is there to be a resource for you. They can help you talk through issues and problems and help you develop solutions. Do not assume they will step in and "fix" it for you. If the issue is urgent or beyond the scope of your internship, the instructor may contact a supervisor directly to resolve the issue. Most of the time, instructors will support you in your efforts rather than take over.

When things are busy for everyone at the site, it may seem as though the supervisor or the staff does not care about what happens to the intern because they are a lower priority. Hannah, for example, was interning with Child Protective Services while the pandemic was still active. As a result, each supervisor was only in the office one day a week. Hannah found she was rarely in the office with her official supervisor. She called me as her field instructor, very frustrated and ready to switch sites. I encouraged her to be more creative and proactive in finding ways to become involved. Hannah began approaching whatever caseworkers were in the office each day, asking how she could help. The caseworkers were extremely appreciative of her help, and she was asked to apply for an open position when her internship was ending.

Sometimes, you have to take some responsibility for making the internship a good training experience as well. So, instead of showing up and simply following someone around, you may need to be flexible and even creative. For example, if you spot something that needs to be addressed and feel doing so is within your range of abilities, you might volunteer to take on the project. In addition to filling in hours that otherwise might go unused or be less than educational, you will also show you have initiative and the willingness to help where you can.

It is also very helpful to have a concrete idea of what you need and a few possible paths to reach that goal. If you feel you are not getting enough client contact, for instance, brainstorm ways you can increase contact, maybe by shadowing other workers or providing support via phone or video. If you feel you are mostly doing office work or paperwork, have a list of other activities you would like to try.

Lastly, remember your supervisor may not be as aware of the problem as you think. Busy supervisors will often assume everything is going fine unless they hear differently.

Managing Up

Books and articles have been written about the concept of **managing up**, which is the practice of using the traits of the identified leader to help you be the most productive employee. Luke Wiesner, a conflict resolution coach for the University of California, Merced, offers these guidelines for what managing up is and is not:

- NOT supervising or overseeing your boss
- NOT going above your boss's head to have your voice heard
- NOT evaluating or judging your boss's management or leadership style
- NOT about changing or developing your boss into a better manager or leader
- NOT about challenging decisions or actions your boss takes
- Managing your relationship with your boss
- Developing and cultivating a productive working rapport with your boss
- Learning your boss's management, leadership and **communication** styles and preferences
- Increasing your awareness of your own work and communication style and preferences
- Adapting and aligning the work styles of you and your boss to form a productive working relationship centered around mutual growth and understanding, work productivity, and career development. (Wiesner, n.d.)

In the *Harvard Business Review* article **"What Everyone Should Know About Managing Up**," managing editor of HBR's Insight Centers Dana Rousmaniere identifies the following actions as important for any employee wanting to improve their performance:

- Anticipate your boss's needs and ask how they prefer to have problems or concerns communicated.
- Disagree respectfully and productively.
- Build and maintain trust with your boss.
- Be friendly, but don't assume a friendship with your boss.
- Be helpful and make your boss look good by doing your job and doing it well. (Rousmaniere, 2015)

The key in all relationships, formal or informal, is to be authentic, honest, and impeccable with your word.

Challenges of Supervision Licenses and Attributions

6.5 Conclusion

Internships are an efficient and effective way of learning because they provide professional guidance. Often, supervisors can work one-on-one with you in ways that are compatible with your learning style, which is more difficult to achieve in a classroom environment. Although coursework gives you an idea of what to expect, it is the guided experience that turns theory into knowledge and knowledge into ability. Supervised experience allows you to test theoretical concepts and perspectives in a real-world environment and determine which techniques work best.

Good supervision provides you with a model for developing your own style as a helping professional; the challenges and opportunities you encounter during the **internship** process can help you clarify your goals and understand how to use constructive feedback for professional development. An outstanding supervisory relationship can be one of the most beneficial parts of an internship. Take the time to think about what you want out of supervision, and be prepared to ask for what you need. Clear goals and good **communication** will go far in making supervision a highlight of your internship experience.

Conclusion Licenses and Attributions

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6.6 Practice

Journal Prompts

1. What type of supervision are you hoping for? How will you respond if you and your supervisor have clashing styles? Is there a student style in figure 6.3 that describes you? How might this impact your relationship with your supervisor? How can you prepare to hear **constructive criticism** and use it effectively?

Self-Care Activity

1. Learning How to Prioritize Your Needs: People who work in the helping fields often have trouble prioritizing their own needs. However, when our own needs are not being met, we are compromising our ability to be effective helpers. Remember, your supervisor cannot read your mind. Make a list of the most important experiences or knowledge you hope to get out of your **internship**. Share this list with your supervisor, and continue to refer to it throughout your internship. Feel free to modify it as you accomplish items or as your priorities change. However, keep it handy to refer to, especially when you are feeling unsatisfied or unchallenged.

Class Discussion Topics

1. Explore specific microaggressions at the **Micropedia of Microaggressions**. What are some comments or situations listed on this site that you've heard or experienced? What examples surprised you?
2. What makes a good supervisor?
3. Case StudyYou have been at your internship site for a few weeks now. You and your supervisor have a good working alliance, and she entrusts you with a small set of duties each week. As you are reporting to your supervisor, she seems almost annoyed, if not angry, that you are telling her about your day-to-day experiences at the agency. Your supervisor did not finish listening to you before she gathered a stack of papers from her desk and told you she had to go. These are the courses of action you can take:

   1. Follow her out of the room and demand an explanation.
   2. Talk to her about it when you come back next time.
   3. Talk to coworkers about your supervisor.
   4. Do not let it get to you; she is a busy lady, and she could just be running late.
   5. What do you do? Why? Discuss the options with your classmates.

Practice Licenses and Attributions

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Considering Equity and Ethical Issues

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7.1 Chapter Overview

In **Chapter 2**, we introduced the idea of professional **ethics** and how internships require students to take on the responsibilities of a professional human service worker. The **internship** involves working with other people who are being offered a service of one type or another, so ethical principles and practices must be a focus of the experience. It is your responsibility as a human services intern to uphold them in everything you do and say. This chapter will focus on the ethical decisions and dilemmas that interns often face when first working in the field.

After reading this chapter, you will be able to do the following:
- Illustrate connections between professional ethics and day-to-day practice.
- Describe common **ethical dilemmas** seen in **fieldwork** settings.
- Create a plan to address ethical challenges as they arise.

- Boundaries: the ability to determine our own safe zones to our emotions. Keeping separate needs, desires, thoughts, and feelings from those of others. In the human services context, boundaries most often refer to keeping our needs and wants separate from those of our clients.
- Code of ethics: the collection of behavior standards adopted by a profession or agency
- Confidentiality: spoken, written, and behavioral communication practices designed to provide and maintain an individual's or group's privacy. Includes licensing and HIPPA requirements.
- Dual relationships: a relationship between a human services worker and another person or group that involves a conflict of interest. Common examples include dating a client or using a client for the clinician's own personal or financial gain.
- Ethics: Ethics are a code of morals or a philosophy that guides an individual's behaviors and actions. Ethics also include a set of standards or code of conduct set forth by a company or profession.
- Ethical dilemmas: situations in which you are faced with unclear choices about how to handle a situation with a client. This may be a difference between your ethical guidelines and another's, a conflict between your personal and professional ethics, or a clash between two competing ethical standards.

Chapter Overview Licenses and Attributions

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7.2 Understanding Professional Ethics

The code of ethical standards for the National Organization for Human Services (NOHS) was established as guidelines for those who study, practice, or receive services from the profession. The standards embraced by the profession promote fundamental values including "respecting the dignity and welfare of all people; promoting self-determination; honoring cultural **diversity**; advocating for social justice; and acting with integrity, honesty, genuineness, and objectivity" (NOHS, 2015, para. 2). The standards give human service workers guidelines that should frame our decisions when working in the field. The Human Services ethical standards are not **laws**, but they provide a professional framework that we can apply to our work. These standards are written and organized to guide Human Services workers in a variety of areas and assist in addressing situations they are likely to encounter in their professional roles.

Interns, as well as professionals, should be familiar with the code of **ethics** and strive to adhere to it. When **ethical dilemmas** arise, this code will be the guiding force to solve the issue at hand.

Ethics and the Law

Ethics are the rules of conduct. Often, they are recognized as the best practices based on the underlying principles of a given profession. Ethics are not laws, which are actual **regulations** one must comply with because they are established by an authority with judicial responsibility and the power of enforcement. In the most basic sense, ethics are principles, and laws are requirements.

At many **internship** sites, one may see dedicated people working in ways that are consistent with a **code of ethics** that they take seriously. Typ-

ically, their mission is to ensure that people are treated fairly, equally, and respectfully. It is easy to understand how ethics and laws, such as licensing laws, protect clients as they help ensure clients receive reasonable treatment. However, it is almost equally important to realize that ethics and laws also protect the workers. They provide rules that may be helpful in guiding us through difficult or risky professional situations.

As new circumstances in human services emerge, they are examined by professional organizations and courts, sometimes resulting in revised or new codes of conduct, laws, and regulations. Understanding these issues ensures the clients' safety and keeps a worker out of future legal trouble. Staying up to date and adhering to the standards of practice might be the only defense from a lawsuit.

Most professions will offer classes or continuing education that focus on existing ethics and laws, particularly those that require credentialing. Students should ask instructors and supervisors about the practices that apply to their profession and their placement site, as well as what the laws are and why they are in place. Moreover, the instructors and supervisors should advise students on handling ethical issues when students encounter them.

Professional Versus Personal Ethics

In addition to having a thorough understanding of the ethical code in your profession and the facility in which you work, it is important to become aware of and develop your own personal code of ethics. There may be professional situations in your internship in which your personal ethical principles might be challenged or come into play, often quite unexpectedly. The more you know

about what you believe and value in advance, the better prepared you may be when this time arises.

Consequently, self-awareness is helpful in these situations. After all, people are rarely simple, and a client's behavior may evoke conscious or unconscious feelings or reactions based on your experiences and background. Though this process is mostly an introspective one, it is often helpful to discuss these issues with others, such as your colleagues, instructor, and supervisor. Taking the time to develop a clear and reasonably articulate ethical foundation will help you face challenging situations in the future and often will provide a sense of direction.

Having a firm grasp of your personal beliefs may also be of value when making rapid decisions, such as in a critical relational moment or when dealing with a crisis. Maybe you are a social worker at your local agency, and someone you dislike walks through the door looking for help. Perhaps you are interning with county corrections and are assigned a client who is someone you grew up with but have not seen in years. Maybe you are a case manager driving a client to their medication appointment, and you think you smell marijuana coming out of the apartment when the individual opens the door. Perhaps your next client is accused of child, spousal, or elder abuse. All these situations are examples that are likely to stir up conscious and unconscious reactions that challenge your ability to conduct yourself in a professional manner. The more you know about your personal values and ethics, the better able you will be to conduct yourself in accordance with your professional ethics and obligations without being overly judgmental or jumping to premature conclusions.

As professionals working in the human services field, our professional ethics take precedence over our personal ones. Professional ethics give us the ability to make ethical decisions that maintain consistent expectations. Professional ethics also provide clear guidelines for handling the consequences of inappropriate behavior. Ultimately, the National Organization for Human Services' code of ethical standards should be the foundation of your decisions. If there is a conflict between your personal ethics and those of the profession, you need to seek guidance from your supervisor before you move ahead. When we find ourselves confronting a clash between our own ethics and values and those of the field (or the agency), it is extremely important that we pause and seek guidance from our supervisor and instructor before acting on the issue.

Case Study: When Personal and Professional Ethics Collide

Stella's first human services internship was with a small, community-based organization that provided services to teen parents. They sought this placement because their professional background was in research at large public organizations. They were hoping to get experience in a less bureaucratic and hopefully more flexible environment. What she found out was that their own personal code of ethics was actually more rigid and bureaucratic than they had been aware of. Here is an example of this conflict.

Stella accompanied their supervisor in dropping off Thanksgiving boxes to some pregnant and parenting clients. The boxes contained a turkey and all the usual side dishes. At the home of a young mom who had just had twins, they were instructed to take the food into the kitchen—where they encountered two other turkeys and accompanying boxes of supplies. Stella felt upset when they saw this and felt that the agency was being "used" by the client since they clearly already had two Thanksgiving boxes from other agencies. When Stella asked their supervisor about it, he chuckled at the question, clearly unfazed by the situation. He said, "Who knows how much they have to eat on a daily basis? If they have the opportunity to stock up on food for other days, what could be wrong with that?" It made Stella stop and consider their own attitude about what was "right" and "fair." Stella realized that they were not the "turkey police," and as an intern, their job was to help clients access services, not judge their choices. As Stella became a more seasoned worker, they understood that the holidays are often the only time of year when food is widely accessible for those who need it, and taking advantage of that to stock up is an appropriate and smart response for a parent of young children.

Responsibility to the Public and Society

According to NOHS, the ethical responsibility of the human services worker to the public and safety should be to provide services without discrimination and to be knowledgeable about the cultural diversity of their community. They are also expected to know local, state, and federal laws to prevent conflict with ethical guidelines or client rights. There are also standards around social justice and awareness that political issues and social issues impact specific populations differently.

Human service professionals are expected to uphold the values of their profession with integrity, honesty, genuineness, and objectivity, as well as being guided by ethical behavior that honors cultural diversity and self-determination of the community they serve. Human service workers have a responsibility to identify clients' needs and to act as advocates for social justice, seeking to eliminate social **oppression**. This means that addressing **inequity** and oppression are part of our professional ethics, not just a personal decision.

This means that not only is it good practice to use an **equity lens**, but it is indeed part of our professional ethics. Using an **equity** lens can provide a way of looking at and acting on issues of justice to ensure that outcomes in the conditions of well-being are improved for marginalized groups, lifting outcomes for all. This can be challenging in several ways. Advocacy and political involvement may be outside your own personal comfort zone. You may have to figure out how you can support these ethical guidelines in a manner that feels comfortable and true for you. This also may include reconsidering our own history and questioning some of the standards that you may bring with you due to your experience. For example, in the previous story "When Professional and Personal Ethics Collide," the worker was forced to reexamine her own attitudes about people who access services and also reconsider her own **privilege** of having never been food insecure.

Ethical codes and licensing laws are intended to protect the client, the practitioner, and the agency by ensuring that clients receive the best treatment within a set of behavioral **boundaries**. Sometimes, the ethics of two professions or agencies may conflict. For example, Catholic Charities offers behavioral and mental health services that do not include abortion, while Planned Parenthood provides women's wellness programs that emphasize choice. If you find that the views of an agency conflict with yours, it is important to think seriously about those conflicts, perhaps even reevaluate the selection of that site if the conflicts seem to be insurmountable. In general, if you agree to be an intern at a site, you have also agreed to act in ways that do not contradict its prevailing values and standards unless they are illegal. If you decide you cannot do that, then you should discuss the problem with your supervisor. If a compromise is not possible, then the ethical path for all concerned may be for you to consider another type of agency.

Sometimes, the problem may not be that clear. There may also be difficulty if the agency you are interning with has a history of ignoring social justice issues. You may find yourself in conflict with the policies and/or procedures in place. Interns are often considered without much power in the structural hierarchy of the agency, but that doesn't mean that you can't advocate for change or indeed, create change. I have had several students who spent time during their internships translating agency forms and lists into a language other than English. Another student helped write a grant that would allow the organization to extend their services to more rural clients. When you observe an issue that needs addressing, think also about ways you can solve the problem. You are more likely to be heard if you bring a solution as well as the problem.

Understanding Professional Ethics Licenses and Attributions

7.3 Common Ethical Challenges for Interns

Ethical challenges in Human Services work are part of the territory as we are working with vulnerable and at-risk populations. To prevent mistakes as much as we can, we need to acquaint ourselves with the most common situations that have the potential for ethical risks and develop risk management protocols to address these issues should they come up. In the following sections, we address some of the most common **ethical dilemmas** you might encounter in your field placement. This is not meant to be a comprehensive list, but merely some areas to be particularly aware of.

Dual Relationships

Dual or multiple relationships occur when a service provider is acting in a professional capacity with a client but is also acting in a different professional, social, or sexual capacity with the same person. Some professions' ethical standards do recognize that not all **dual relationships** are avoidable. The American Psychological Association's (APA) Code of **Ethics** believes that multiple relationships that do not impair the psychologist's objectivity, **competence**, or effectiveness while performing their work and do not endanger the patient are not unethical (APA, 2016). However, the National Organization of Human Services does not support dual or multiple relationships due to the potential for harm or exploitation of the client.

Many dual relationships start with the best of intentions. You live in the same area as the client, so you begin to offer them rides home from their appointments, saving them an hour bus ride with three children in tow. Another client, recently released from prison, is starting their own lawn care company and asks to take care of your yard. Knowing how challenging many people may find their history, you agree to help them get the business on its feet. There is another client who shares your sense of humor, and you begin spending time with him after sessions, talking and joking around.

Any time you stray from your role as a human service provider, you begin to muddy the ethical waters. Again, your intentions may not be to take advantage or exploit your client, but once you are outside the bounds of the professional relationship, it is easy for actions to be misinterpreted, both by the client and by others. The fastest way to find yourself in a very difficult situation is to not tell anyone about either your plan to engage in the behavior or reveal that you did engage in the behavior. We talk further about dealing with ethical dilemmas later in the chapter, but getting professional input is critical when it comes to dual relationships. It will not be surprising if you come across this in your **internship**. In fact, one of the most common reasons that mental health professionals get reprimanded or get their licenses

revoked is a dual relationship (specifically a sexual relationship).

Sometimes, it is difficult to avoid a dual relationship. If you reside in a small town in which you also intern, you will likely work with people you have seen at the grocery store or with whom you went to school. You may live in a larger city but are interning at the only agency that provides a particular service. Should a potential client be denied services based on the fact that you live next door to them? When it is unfeasible to avoid dual or multiple relationships, human service professionals should carefully evaluate potential exploitation or harm and discuss this situation with a supervisor.

Confidentiality and Professional Gossip

Due to the nature of human services, **confidentiality** of information is critical to the relationship between worker and client. The client shares personal information with the understanding that this information will be kept confidential and not be shared with others. Confidentiality, or sharing information outside of the professional relationship, can only be breached when the care provider believes it is in the best interest of the client, for his/her safety, or for the public's safety. The law may warrant the need for confidential information to be disclosed in cases of suspected harm to a person with a disability or child or elder abuse. Billing for services provided also creates a possibility for confidentiality to be breached. Client confidentiality may also be breached if a court of law subpoenas the client's file. When a confidentiality agreement is ignored or breached, you are exposing yourself to lawsuits, loss of client-caseworker relationship, and placement **termination**.

Confidentiality, as most interns know, is a key ethical responsibility. There are many dimensions to this issue, such as keeping client and staff information confidential, as well as conversations and observations made at the site and in classroom discussions. Another dimension of confidentiality to consider is outside of your work and academic environments. Most people have a natural desire to talk about their experiences, particularly meaningful ones, with others. Always check with the supervisor to find out the limitations as to what can and cannot be discussed within and outside of the workplace.

Keep in mind that when talking outside of the workplace, a person's real name and identifying information (information that can be used to identify someone, such as gender, age, physical characteristics, behavioral history, place of residence, occupation, and so on) should never be used. The same rules apply to journals, notes, and, of course, social media. In fact, it is probably best not to even think about "discussing" anything from your practicum using social media, as that record never goes away.

Example: You are in your practicum class and say, "I was taken by surprise at my internship site when Suzie, my best friend from high school, came out of the therapist's office who treats only opioid addicts." It may seem like you have "permission" to share this information at your classroom meeting because there are many Suzies in the world, and you did not mention a last name. However, that would be a mistake because you have revealed what is called personally identifying information. For example, you identified the person as having a common name. Furthermore, you also specified a location and a relationship. Together, these three bits of information are more than enough to identify someone. In this case, someone in the class may have known Suzie in your high school and that she had a best friend who had your first name! Or perhaps the school's social media pages showed a picture of you and Suzie together at an event.

Sometimes, it is not clear that your behavior is breaching confidentiality. As stated previously, we

all have a desire to share our work—both when things go well and when things do not go so well. Many agencies have a norm of caseworkers informally sharing stories about clients with each other on a daily basis.

In general, it is fine to share information on a client with a supervisor or colleagues for coordination of services. Likewise, it is also allowable to share information when seeking assistance with questions about the situation or available services. The need to share information can tempt us to share beyond what is necessary. Professional gossip is a hazard in all workplaces but can be especially difficult when working in human services. It may be that you had a very difficult client interaction, and you feel the need to vent. Or perhaps you overhear other workers sharing stories of challenging cases, and you want to feel a part of the team, so you share a story about a client. Remember to be careful about sharing specific details that can identify a client. Another caseworker may end up working with your client later and have their views influenced by your story.

Another issue that comes up in human services is how to respond when a client tells you something about another worker. Remember that the client's recollection of the event will be colored by their own view of the experiences. Definitely refrain from joining in talking about your colleague. If a client shares information you find concerning, it is best to discuss it with your supervisor or instructor before acting on it.

Regulations concerning client confidentiality often apply to human services settings, too. HIPAA is an acronym for the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act that Congress passed in 1996 and is a compliance requirement for any health professional or setting. Most human services professionals talk about these requirements when discussing ethics, but it is also the law that makes honoring these rules more than just an ethical obligation. These rules apply to all forms of information, including printed, oral, and electronic forms. Furthermore, only the minimum health information necessary to conduct business is to be used or shared. Criminal justice settings may have different rules concerning confidentiality because some records are open to the public for the asking, such as crime reports, so it is always advisable to discuss the rules with your supervisor early in your internship.

Boundary Crossing

Interactions between workers and clients are quite frequent and often close. We are often talking about difficult or highly personal issues. These circumstances can create a false sense of intimacy with our clients and begin to influence our professional relationship with the client. This can lead to sharing more information about ourselves than we intended or engaging in behaviors that are outside of the scope of our professional role. This can be as simple as sharing details about your own family or giving a client a ride somewhere when that is not a normal service provided to clients.

Once we begin to compromise the professional relationship, it becomes easier and easier to slide into a more personal relationship with a client. This is what we refer to as boundary crossing. These **boundaries** are guidelines, rules, or limits we create to identify what are the safe, reasonable, and permissible ways we can allow other people to interact with us and what to expect when those boundaries are crossed. Strong and healthy boundaries also help us navigate a professional relationship, even when the relationship includes some intimacy. Healthy boundaries also inform people of the degree of help you are able to provide, either in the amount of time, resources, or energy you can afford to give. Boundaries can also be crossed by clients. One of the most common problems arises when a client gives a gift to a worker. Most agencies have rules around what is admissible to accept and what is not. It is a good

idea to become familiar with this policy ahead of time so that you will be able to respond if this happens.

Overidentification is a common cause of boundary crossing. When we identify too much with a client and a situation, it often blurs the lines between our lives and that of the client. This often happens with the best of intentions but can have a negative effect on the relationship and the work. For example, you are working with an immigrant man who is struggling with sobriety. As an immigrant male yourself, you decide to recommend the AA meeting you attend since there are other immigrants who attend. You credit this group with helping you stay sober, and you identify so strongly with the client you become invested in their sobriety as well. You end up giving the client rides to and from the meeting, sometimes stopping for coffee. What started as a professional relationship now looks more like a friendship now that boundaries have been crossed. Now that the client relies on you for extra support, it will be difficult to step back into a more professional role without upsetting the client.

Boundaries are not universally understood or honored. What works well in one country is a disaster in another. In sum, boundaries are not a "one size fits all" concept. It is important to be aware of what some of the cultural norms are around interacting with others that might become important.

Cultural Customs

If your duties include home visits, it is also good to be aware of the cultural customs around hospitality that may come into play when meeting clients in their own homes. For example, many cultures do not wear shoes in the house, and you will be expected to remove your footwear. Also, in many cultures, it is important to serve guests food, and guests who refuse to eat or drink can appear rude or condescending. I had a student once accompany a male supervisor to visit with a very traditional male Muslim client. The client was shocked when the student (a female) tried to shake his hand when they met. In the client's **culture**, men and women who are not related do not touch each other in public. It is important to have **cultural humility** and become comfortable navigating different customs and practices.

In the next section, we discuss how to handle dilemmas when they arise.

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7.4 Handling Ethical Dilemmas

In human services, we will always run into problems where issues are subject to interpretation. Some will be interpersonal conflicts, and others will be **ethical dilemmas**. For both situations, we need to know how to proceed to solve them. When faced with an ethical dilemma, we can approach it by focusing on the consequences of our actions, or we can focus on the actions themselves. Because we are bound to our code of **ethics** and standards, we have to ensure that our actions do not cause harm or foul play and that we do not engage in acts that are wrong by their nature—e.g., blackmail, coercion, etc.

Case Study: An Ethical Dilemma in the Field

I started my 440-hour **internship** journey at an adult living facility. This was an all-around care facility, and its residents ranged from people who were completely independent to those who needed extra support in a memory care setting. I mainly supported people within the assisted living part of the facility. Some of the individuals experienced physical disabilities, others experienced differing levels of dementia, and some experienced both. Everyone was different and unique with their own personal care needs. I gained a couple of amazing skills while interning there. One of those was how to redirect. Towards the end of my internship, I had gotten the hang of how to use this skill but had one very unexpected challenge arise involving sexual consent among older adults. Now, this situation tends to become a hot-button issue because it revolves around sexuality. This is not really talked about in facilities, which leads to the stories of rampant sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) within nursing homes. Families may not want to have these types of conversations and, in some situations, forbid their parents from engaging in these activities.

I got to experience this situation unfold firsthand. A new woman entered the program and was immediately smitten with one of the residents. The woman was said to have been highly functioning with the dementia she experienced, whereas the male was stated to have a lower amount of cognitive function. He would recite nursery rhymes and make funny noises. He could answer questions in the moment but did not remember a lot. The two began a physical relationship. Not long after, the family of the man found out that they were together and decided that was not okay. They told the facility to keep her away from him and that it was wrong for them to be together. This was my first experience in learning about the intricacies of working with people.

The family was the legal guardian and had the power to make decisions on his behalf because he was deemed unable to make decisions in his own best interests; it also could have been that he did not have the mental capacity to consent to a physical relationship. The family saw the woman was very aggressive in her pursuit of this relationship, and they saw her behavior as predatory. The man said yes to her, but the concern was whether or not he was able to consent and if he understood what was going on. So, the family then told them they were not allowed to continue the relationship, and now the facility, myself included, had to enforce it.

Since I was new and unknowledgeable about how to handle the situation, I did what I was instructed to do and kept them away from each other. This was easier said than done on a bus with limited seating and two people determined to see each other. My supervisor told them they could not sit together and did not allow any type of wiggle room. So here we were, with me sitting next to a confused, upset man, and the women behind us yelling and complaining about the treatment that they were receiving. This only made the man even more upset.

Using the tool of redirection, I asked the man, "Hey, how was your lunch? I only had the biscuits and soup. What did you get?" He said, "I do not remember what I had." The lady behind us said, "Oh, you had the seafood alfredo." He said "What? I did? Are you sure? I don't have any leftovers." She replied, "Well, because you ate it." He looked at me and said, "Welp, guess it was

good then." This kicked off laughter about the food, and everyone jumped in on the conversation. I will always remember the sigh of relief that came from my supervisor. This encounter and how I handled the situation was the best use of the skills I learned working with these individuals. The gift of distraction became another tool in my tool belt.

Identifying Issues Early

The best time to solve ethical dilemmas is before they become major issues. It may be that you are feeling inclined to overshare with a client. You may have heard colleagues talking about clients in a local restaurant in a manner you thought could identify people. It may be that you have an "out of the box" idea for assisting a client, but you're not sure if it is within agency policy. Sometimes you may feel like you are overreacting or being an alarmist. If you are feeling unsure about a situation, trust your instincts. Especially as an intern, you are still developing your own professional identity and direction. It may turn out to be a non-issue, but responding ahead of time is much easier than figuring out a solution when a dilemma has already developed.

Asking for Help

When you have questions about possible ethical issues, the number-one most important step is asking for help and guidance from a trusted colleague or supervisor. Asking for help is not a sign of weakness but of determination to overcome a hurdle. I frequently tell students the best way to find themselves in the middle of an ethical problem is to keep the issue to themselves. When you are unsure of a situation, your supervisor and colleagues are the best sources of information and guidance. They will be more familiar with the agency policies and have possibly been involved in a similar situation.

When you say you could use some input handling a case, it may make you feel vulnerable and as if you are unable to handle the work. The truth is that all of us have been in a sticky ethical situation at one time or another, and asking for assistance can be a sign of growth and humility. Asking for input greatly expands the body of knowledge and expertise available to you with which to view the situation and decide upon a course of action.

Your Instructor and Classmates as Resources

By the time you are completing your internship, you may have spent months or even years with your teachers and classmates. You and your classmates are now completing the final step in your education before either going out to begin your career or moving to the next step in your education. Do not overlook them as a source of support when you are having ethical questions. In fact, it is extremely unlikely that you are the only student in your cohort who is going through or has gone through an ethical dilemma themselves. Your instructors also bring a wealth of professional experience and knowledge that they are happy to share. Your willingness to discuss your issues will again give you access to more points of view and may also encourage other classmates to share their own concerns. This enriches the educational experience for all of you.

Handling Ethical Dilemmas Licenses and Attributions

7.5 Conclusion

This chapter focused primarily on the role of **ethics** in the **internship** process. The issues discussed here are just a few examples of the importance of professional ethics for human service workers. While **ethical dilemmas** can feel particularly intimidating during your internship, you will continue to confront ethical issues throughout your career in the field. However, with time and experience, you will get more comfortable handling them.

Conclusion Licenses and Attributions

7.6 Practice

Journal Prompts

1. What ethical challenges do you see staff navigating, or have navigated yourself, at your placement site?
2. What have been some ethical challenges for you in the past? How did you resolve them?
3. How can **equity** play a part both in these dilemmas and in the proposed solutions?

Self-Care Activity

1. Using Meditation as an Ethical Support and Safeguard: Nelly Kaufer LPC is a licensed professional counselor and psychotherapist in private practice who integrates Buddhist psychology into her clinical orientation. She has been teaching continuing education workshops integrating meditation and mindfulness to mental health professionals for about twenty-five years. She has pioneered continuing education workshops for clinical professionals exploring the role meditation can play in helping mental health professionals avoid ethical pitfalls. Ms. Kaufer bases her training on the idea that we are likely to be more mindful in our work if we are mindful in our lives outside of work. By not being mindful and present in our work, we might find ourselves tempted to shortcut processes or settle for easy answers that may not be the most ethical choice. The basis for this mindfulness is a practice of reflective meditation. Developing your own reflective meditation practice can be an excellent source of **self-care** nourishment. The instructions below have been provided by Nelly Kaufer LPC and Pine Street Sangha, Portland, Oregon.

These basic meditation instructions can be helpful for beginning meditators. If you already have a meditation practice, you can try these instructions, or you can meditate in the ways that you are accustomed.

In an open, unstructured meditation approach, there are many ways to meditate. You'll find your way, and over time, it will change. By reflecting

upon your meditative process, you become aware of how you're meditating and how meditation supports and informs you. Here are some initial suggestions to get started.

Finding Structure

- Choose a comfortable position, maybe with the support of a chair or cushion. It's easier to settle when you are comfortable.
- Find a quiet place where you're likely not to be disturbed.
- Choose a length of time to meditate. Consider starting with 10-30 minutes. Don't stress yourself trying to meditate for too long. Using a timer can help.

Moving Around

- Let your thoughts, feelings, emotions, and attention move around. Whatever arises in meditation is okay: nothing is inherently taboo. Let your attention go where it is drawn. This might not feel like "meditation," though consider that this is another kind of meditation with different benefits.
- Try to keep your body still. If you become uncomfortable, move slowly and carefully into a more comfortable posture. Stillness in meditation develops with practice over time.

Settling In

- At times you may want to ground your attention, especially if things become chaotic or overwhelming. You need not stay for long, though sometimes you will settle for a while.
- You can experiment with perching on the still point where your body touches the earth, where the feet touch the ground, or where the body touches the chair, couch, or cushion.
- If you have a meditation practice, use a focus object that comes easily to you such as the breath, awareness of the body, or a mantra.
- No need to settle on a perch when something else is calling for your attention.

After Meditating

- Take time to reflect upon your meditative experiences; this is how you'll develop more meditative insight.
- Journaling can support awareness and memory.

  1. Write down what is easiest to remember first. Then fill in more as you remember it.
  2. Describe your experience in your own words.
  3. Try and stick with what happened in the meditation. If you add interpretation or associations, put these thoughts in parenthesis or some other notation. This helps discern what happened in the meditation from what followed from it.

- Consider the content of your thoughts, the tone of your emotions, your relationship to your experience. Did you hear sounds, feel sensations, hear thoughts, see visuals? How did you relate to what happened?
- Whatever you remember will be enough. Don't be concerned with remembering all of it: it's not necessary or possible.

Class Discussion Topics

In this chapter, we have discussed just a few of the **ethical dilemmas** that you might face when working in the field. Hopefully this chapter has introduced you to what to look for and also provided some information on resolving ethical problems. The following case studies will give you a chance to talk about these situations with classmates.

Here are some things to keep in mind:

- These are dilemmas—there is usually not one clear "correct" answer.
- Refer to the **NOHS Ethical Standards** to help you decide which ethical issues are involved.
- Keep issues of equity and **culture** in mind as you review proposed responses.

We suggest dividing up into small groups and having each group go over a specific case study or review all of them.

Case Study #1

You are interning at a substance-use treatment program, assisting with client intakes and running group sessions. One of the agency counselors you frequently work with has complimented your knowledge and skill with clients and often requests that you help them run groups. A few months into your **internship**, the counselor asks you if you want to go out to coffee and debrief a recent group session. At coffee, they make it clear that they are interested in pursuing a personal relationship with you. You are currently single and attracted to this person. What should you do?

Case Study #2

Your internship is at a residential youth facility for court-involved teens aged 13–17. You are often told you look like a teenager yourself, which has helped you gain rapport with the residents. The residents state they like you because you are "one of us" and tend to be more open and honest with you. One very quiet resident opens up to you one day because he feels "he can trust you like one of us" and tells you that other residents are bullying him daily and that he is thinking of running away. How do you respond?

Case Study #3

Your agency provides support to new mothers of premature babies. You are conducting a routine home visit with a new mom to check in and deliver some preemie diapers. During your visit, the client mentions that the family loves labradoodles and is hoping to adopt one in the coming year. You happen to mention that your sister raises labradoodles. Two months later, the client asks for your sister's contact information to see about getting one of her puppies. What do you do?

Case Study #4

Your internship involves helping immigrants with **documentation** issues. You are shadowing a caseworker who gets called out of the office on an emergency home visit to a newly arrived Vietnamese family. When you both arrive, you notice the shelf of shoes next to the door and observe the caseworker remove their shoes. In your hurry to get ready this morning, you tore an enormous hole in your sock, which will clearly show if you remove your shoe. The family notices your hesitancy and quickly states you don't need to remove

your footwear. What do you do? (Note—this actually happened to one of the authors!)

Case Study #5

You have been working with older adults for a loneliness prevention program in a rural area. You are nearing the end of your internship and have let your clients know that this will be your last week. You have several clients who want to give you a going-away gift to thank you for your help. Here is a list of possible gifts to consider. Which ones (if any) would be ethical to accept? What about the situation impacts your decision? If you don't think you should accept it, how will you respond to the client?

1. A package of homemade desserts
2. Gold jewelry with a Christian cross on it
3. A $50 gift card to a local restaurant
4. A $5 Starbucks card
5. A handmade quilt made especially for you
6. An antique clock that you had admired previously
7. A card you are asked not to open at the time, which contains $100 cash

Practice Licenses and Attributions

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Developing Competence and Confidence

How to Navigate this Book Online

Table of Contents

Every page of this book has a button labeled CONTENTS. In most browsers, this button will be in the upper left corner. You can click anywhere on that button to show the book's table of contents. Clicking the button again hides the table of contents.

In the table of contents, you can click on a chapter title to navigate to the beginning of that chapter.

You can also click on the "+" in the table of contents to see the chapter's sections and navigate directly to that place in the book.

Turning a Page

If you're reading on a larger screen, look at the bottom of the page. There is a button in the lower right corner labeled "Next →" that you can click to move forward, and another button in the lower left corner labeled "← Previous" that you can click to move backward.

Reading on Smaller Screens

On smaller screens, like phones and tablets, the CONTENTS are at the top of the page. Look for the Previous and Next buttons at either the top or bottom of the page.

8.1 Chapter Overview

Do we need **confidence** before we can become competent, or do we need to be competent to develop confidence? This chapter examines the fundamental skills necessary for the human services intern to be competent in the discipline. Many of the topics examined focus on personality development as a tool for developing professional success.

Often people are drawn to the helping professions because of a personal struggle they were able to overcome, and now they want to help others overcome similar challenging situations. Because what called them to their profession was a powerful motivational force, the challenges awaiting them as professionals will be equally challenging because they may have to revisit episodes of their previous struggles over and over as they help their clients attempt to overcome theirs.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After reading this chapter, you will be able to do the following:
- Discuss critical components of a professional identity, including assertiveness, conflict resolution, and self-control.
- Describe strategies for building professional confidence in the face of uncertainty.
- Seek support through mentorship, accountability partners, and constructive feedback.
- Identify short and long-term professional goals using reflection and ongoing education.

PREVIEW OF KEY TERMS

- Accountability partner: a colleague who supports you to achieve a certain goal or follow through on a commitment.
- Communication: the verbal and nonverbal exchange of information between two or more people.
- Competence: the ability to successfully perform the duties and activities of your profession.
- Confidence: the belief that you can be successful when presented with a challenge.
- Continuous personal improvement: the need to be current by participating in training and activities that promote professional and personal growth.
- Mentoring: guidance and support given from a professional already in the field.
- Self-assessment: an informal self-evaluation of your work performance, and/or personal growth used for appraising strengths and weaknesses and developing strategies for improvement.

Chapter Overview Licenses and Attributions

8.2 Your Professional Identity

The field of human services as the profession we are familiar with today dates back to the late 19th and early 20th centuries when nationalized systems of welfare provision were established. Today the field of human services spans several disciplines, adding versatility to the profession. When you enter the field, your professional identity contributes to your sense of purpose and self-worth. Studies suggest that when your identity is tied to your profession, you will be more successful and remain in your profession longer (Moorhead, 2019; Shim, Hwang, & Lee, 2009).

A study based on literature reviews identified five components that are critical for professional identity development:

1. Reflection
2. **Mentoring**
3. Professional socialization
4. Self-efficacy
5. Critical thinking

By reflecting on previous experiences, you can learn from the past and apply those lessons to future activities. Mentorship helps to share and expose the intern to social norms, values, and behavioral standards held by the profession. Professional socialization strengthens the sense of belonging and identification with those who share common experiences, thus helping in **confidence** building and trust in other professionals. Self-efficacy refers to the belief that you are capable of engaging in behavior to create desired changes. It contributes to job satisfaction and job performance. Critical thinking, the self-directed, self-disciplined, self-monitored, and self-corrective thinking used in problem-solving allows us to reflect, examine, and gauge our professional identity development. The internal work we do on ourselves has a ripple effect on our identities.

Much like Sigmund Freud explained, we wear masks for every occasion, but underneath all those masks is our bare essence. As interns, as we develop our personal and professional identities, we must always remember that reflection is a tool for transformation.

Most of the concepts you have learned in this and other classes have given you a foundation for building your professional identity. One of the most important building blocks for human service workers is developing an assertive professional personality. It is a definite advantage to be assertive with clients and other service providers. Just like setting **boundaries** helps people protect themselves against unwanted and often draining experiences, assertiveness is communicating to be heard so you can get your needs met.

Along with assertive **communication** comes the responsibility of facing interpersonal conflict in a mature and responsible manner. Conflicts are part of the human experience and result from not getting our needs met. Sound familiar? Yes, in assertiveness, you express your desire to be heard, and in conflict resolution, you work toward a solution that works best for all of the parties involved. This can be difficult when people have two different goals in the same situation.

Developing Assertiveness

Assertiveness relies on communication and respecting the needs and wishes of others while honoring their boundaries. As part of being an assertive person, there is the responsibility of being clear about your intentions and expectations, but above all, having a sense of self-control for those times when others around you are creating a toxic environment. If you need to confront

someone, be clear as to what you want, and take a firm stand without turning to rude behavior.

Assertiveness does not mean aggressiveness, quite the contrary. An assertive person is action-oriented and emotionally strong but does not rely on getting their needs met by ignoring the needs of others. Reduce your stress level by knowing what to accept and when to say "no." If you are not getting clear feedback, repeat the point in a non-confrontational way using "I" statements, such as "I feel/think/believe." Learn to be observant, and pick your battles judiciously. Base your decisions on facts and keep your emotions under control. Apologize when it is appropriate. Being assertive does not mean you have to always be right. You will soon see yourself as having a higher sense of self-confidence and self-esteem. Avoid being a "victim" and the emotional doormat of others.

This is not to say that being assertive is easy, especially if you come from a marginalized population. Behavior that is seen as assertive in men can often be labeled aggressive when performed by women. This is especially problematic for black women. The "Angry Black Woman" stereotype has been present for decades. When a black woman responds negatively to a work situation, the blame is often put on her personality rather than the situation (Motro, 2022).

Conflict Resolution

Conflicts are bound to occur during an **internship** where differences of opinion or miscommunication exist. Conflicts are about not getting our needs met. Whether these needs appear factual or fictitious to others, they are real to the person with the conflict, and a solution needs to be found before it escalates into a major dispute. Conflicts that have the potential to negatively influence the organization's productivity have to be addressed as soon as possible.

The Thomas-Kilmann Instrument (TKI), an assessment tool for measuring a person's conflict-handling style, has been the standard for professionals for decades. The TKI uses an individual's behavior measured along two dimensions:

- Assertiveness, the extent to which the person attempts to satisfy their own concerns.
- Cooperativeness, the extent to which the person attempts to satisfy the other person's concerns.

These two dimensions are used to define five different styles for responding to conflict situations:

1. Competing (assertive and uncooperative)
2. Accommodating (unassertive and cooperative)
3. Avoiding (unassertive and uncooperative)
4. Collaborating (both assertive and cooperative – this is an ideal solution)
5. Compromising (moderate in both assertiveness and cooperativeness)

Figure 8.1 plots out these different styles according to their level of assertiveness and cooperativeness.
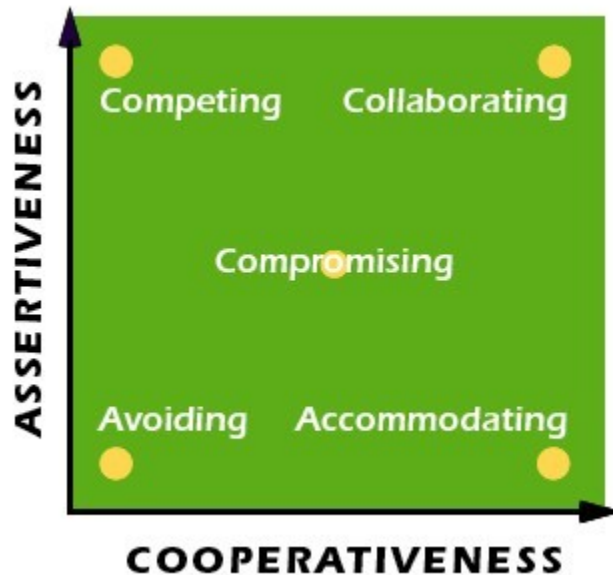
Figure 8.1 Understanding your conflict style can help you learn to be more effective at dealing with difficult situations.

Now that you know the conflict-handling styles of the parties involved, apply the following standard techniques for reaching a solution:

1. Separate the person from the problem (focus on the issue, not the person).
2. Meet in a mutually agreeable place (meet in a safe, neutral environment).
3. Brainstorm ideas for possible solutions that benefit both parties.
4. Agree on a solution (select the best mutually acceptable solution and document it).

Self-Control

Self-control is mastering one's desires, and exercising delayed gratification, to ensure that we do not over- or under-indulge. Individuals with high self-control are happier, healthier, and wealthier, and this is because almost all traits and behaviors are partly influenced by genetic factors (Polderman et al., 2015). Genes significantly contribute to individual differences in self-control across the lifespan.

There are three components of self-control:

1. Impulsivity (the ability to avoid making thoughtless decisions)
2. Emotions (the ability to control one's response to difficult circumstances)
3. Desires (the ability to prevent actions or emotions that impact good judgment)

Too much self-control results in perfectionism. People with low self-control have difficulty regulating their feelings, actions, self-discipline, and goals, and lack willpower and the ability to control their emotions. People with low self-control have difficulty building self-confidence, making friends, and getting along with others at work.

Radically Open Dialectical Behavior Therapy (RODBT) discusses the skill of self-control as responding with a flexible mind (Lynch, 2018). You can acknowledge that you are having strong feelings without knowing these feelings are a true reflection of the situation. Instead of acting upon feelings, the goal is to gain more information about the situation and then share your own view with the goal of creating a shared understanding.

Your Professional Identity Licenses and Attributions

8.3 Confidence in the Face of Uncertainty

Most people lack **confidence** and are uncertain of what lies ahead, especially when new to a career. It is a natural response to feel insecure and overly cautious about unknown horizons. But be assured that if your teachers, mentors, and accountability partners did their job as prescribed, chances are that you will do just fine in the field. It is about taking the first step and knowing that ahead there are people who, just like you, were once insecure. The following concepts are strategies used by people who want to strive for more than just good—reach for excellence in the hope of reaching perfection along the way.

Embrace Good Enough over Perfect

In the human services field, you are evaluated on whether your work complies with the requirements of your job. Seldom is perfection an actual measure because human qualities and behaviors cannot be measured on a Likert scale. If your work is considered good, it means you have met the standards of that specific objective. Aiming for perfection is a noble goal, but it is an impossible level to achieve because in human services, you work with people, and people are highly unpredictable and seldom satisfied.

Listen Reflectively

Most of us are just bad listeners, especially today when cell phones seem to be attached to our hands. When engaged in a face-to-face conversation with another person, ideally, as listeners, we should be present, actively engaged in the conversation, and make the speaker feel validated.

Successful listening is being a reflective listener. Reflective listeners use a receptive body language, that is, the body is relaxed and vulnerable; we maintain direct eye contact with the speaker's eyes and respond to verbal and nonverbal cues. The key here is to listen, rephrase what you are hearing, and ask for clarification if unsure. For example, a coworker tells you that you seemed "a little rude" to a client. While your first reaction may be to defend yourself, reflective listening invites you to sit with this information and reflect on what you are hearing. You may already be aware that you were in a bad mood because of something else, or you may not understand what the coworker means. You can then ask a clarifying question, such as, "Can you tell me more about what you observed? Do you have suggestions for improvement?" This turns the interaction into a learning opportunity.

Use Positive Self-Talk

Many people are aware of an internal or inner voice that is continuously running a monologue throughout the day. This inner voice, or self-talk, is the internal conscious dialogue influenced by the subconscious mind. The thoughts, beliefs, questions, ideas, and experiences we have are used by the brain to make sense of our daily existence. Pessimists use self-defeating internal dialogue. Human nature tends to lean toward negative self-talk and, as such, fosters fears and tears down our self-confidence. Optimists are positive thinkers, effective stress managers, and have a better quality of life—unlike the pessimists, whose internal dialogue is usually not based on reality and drowns the self-concept in negativity.

Your self-talk needs to emphasize positivity as well as silencing your inner critic by shifting the focus away from criticism to **self-reflection**. Instead of focusing on a supposed mistake, ask yourself bigger questions about the situation, such as:

- Will it matter in five years?
- What would you say to a friend in the same situation?
- What will you do differently in the future?

In Focus: Imposter Syndrome

Imposter syndrome—the feeling like you do not belong either in a profession, a role, or at an agency—has become a topic of much discussion in the helping fields. There are many articles, podcasts, and even books dedicated to the concept of imposter syndrome and how to erase these thoughts from your mind.

There are even lists to help you decide if you have imposter syndrome, like this one from the website Verywellmind.com:

- Do you agonize over even the smallest mistakes or flaws in your work?
- Do you attribute your success to luck or outside factors?
- Are you sensitive to even **constructive criticism**?
- Do you feel like you will inevitably be found out as a phony?
- Do you downplay your own expertise, even in areas where you are genuinely more skilled than others?

Most of the materials on imposter syndrome focus on how you, the worker, can deal with these feelings and change your behavior. However, there is another viewpoint—many of us feel imposter syndrome because the workplace has spent years trying to convince us we don't belong. Our feelings are valid in the fact that we have intentionally been made to feel as if we are imposters. If this is the case, then the best approach is to simply ignore those messages. We are not the ones with the problem—the problem resides in the white, male-dominated majority **culture**.

The video below is a speech given by Reshma Saujoni, the founder and CEO of GirlsWho Code, in which she debunks the concept of imposter syndrome.

This interactive content is not available in this version of the text. It can be accessed online here: **https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BoHDDgeQtlc**

Figure 8.2 **Imposter Syndrome Is A Scheme: Reshma Saujani's Smith College Commencement Address [YouTube Video]**. **Transcript**

Manage Stress

Stress is unavoidable. It can be beneficial if under control but damaging if not. The most common stressors in life are death in the family, money, divorce, health, work, and the regular hassles of daily life. When these stressors are not controlled, they force the body to be in high alert mode, causing concentration problems and mood swings, as well as mental and physical problems, such as heart disease, high blood pressure, diabetes, depression, and anxiety. Stress-related disorders—for example, PTSD, depression, and anxiety—are seen more often in women than in men (National Center for PTSD, Boston VA Healthcare System, Boston, MA).

Aside from gender differences, resilient personality types tend to be less affected and might even be more productive under stress. Resiliency is a learned response. After we overcome a major stressor, we bounce back with a greater appreciation for our lives, family, friends, and other things. Among the top suggestions for lowering stress are exercise and physical activity, meditation, taking time to pamper yourself, and seeking help with daily strains caused by caregiving, relationships, health, work, and money.

Your mental and physical health should always be your top priority.

Practice Daily Self-Care

One of the most common and disturbing bad habits is the lack of time we devote to caring for ourselves—body, mind, and spirit. Often we take better care of our pets and our loved ones forgetting that if we are not feeling well, those who depend on us will not get their needs met. Make it a daily priority to take time out for your body's physical, mental, and spiritual needs. Refer to **Chapter 5** for an in-depth discussion of **self-care**.

Confidence in the Face of Uncertainty Licenses and Attributions

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8.4 Seeking Support and Feedback

Feedback is one way to see ourselves through the eyes of a neutral person so we may look at areas in our lives needing improvement. Feedback can be a fast and effective reality check, and it can help us refocus our efforts and put us back on track so we may achieve our goals. It is best to initiate the process of asking for feedback and making sure you are willing to accept honest and thoughtful comments as **constructive criticism** and an opportunity for professional development. Feedback from your **internship** supervisor is valuable but also feedback from colleagues can be as well. Feedback from peers can be easier to process because of your relationship with them, but you want a balanced **evaluation** of you and your work. If you want feedback in a specific area of your work, you need to create a list of questions so the responses are accurate. Prepare a set of questions ahead of time, as this will make your evaluator's job easier and more likely to be more accurate.

Mentors, Role Models, and Accountability Partners

As you develop your professional role, it is important to identify other professionals or colleagues who can provide support and guidance. Mentors, role models, and accountability partners can each serve a role in your professional development.

Mentors are essential to the success of interns as they are introduced to the field or their internship. The **mentoring** relationship affords important experiences, including improved job performance, recognition by others, personal fulfillment, and increased job satisfaction and commitment. The mentor can impart life-altering experiences fostering professional maturity.

Mentors tend to be senior professionals who encourage and support the younger interns in their transition from student to practitioner and also in professional development. A unique aspect of the mentor-intern relationship that differs from other personal relationships is the focus on career development and growth. The "role model" helps the intern primarily by serving as an example and facilitating professional identity development. Role modeling is less formal than mentoring, although both teach responsibilities and expectations of their professions, role models are more of people who embody ideal behaviors, whereas the mentor is actually teaching or guiding directly.

Often internships will include the establishment of a "buddy system" or "accountability partners." The role of the **accountability partner** is similar to that used by recovery support groups in that the person in recovery is assigned a sponsor who is there to ensure that the person in recovery does not fall back into old habits. Ideally, an accountability partner should be someone who makes interns comfortable enough to share their confidences with them. The accountability partner encourages the interns to continue in their progress and help in areas where progress is lacking. Accountability peers are dedicated to keeping the interns on track. They also do not judge when interns do not live up to the standards or relapse into old habits. Accountability partners promote, coach, and sometimes offer a shoulder to cry on. Ideally, the accountability partner is a fellow intern whose mature judgment is known and trusted.

Accepting Positive Feedback

Receiving feedback is good, whether positive or negative, because both help us improve ourselves. We can use this feedback to recognize our strengths and discover areas to work on. Studies have shown that we are more likely to request corrective feedback than positive feedback and that positive feedback is often downplayed or ignored by recipients (Simonian, 2022).

Positive feedback can help people be more engaged, drive their performance, and achieve success. Positive feedback focuses on our strengths, the contributions we make to the workplace, and how valuable of an employee we are. Acknowledgment and praise for specific behaviors are rewards that help us know we are on the right track. Positive feedback builds trust and employee morale, motivates and engages, lowers turnover rates, and keeps employees happier.

Practice accepting positive feedback without downplaying it or suggesting why you don't deserve it. A simple response of "Thank you" is often enough, or even "I appreciate your feedback."

Accepting Negative Feedback

So your feedback was not what you expected, and now you are upset? The good news is that the feedback is not about you as a person but as you, the employee. Negative feedback is about specific standards that define your work and how you per-

formed these standards in a less-than-optimal manner. By learning to gracefully accept negative feedback, we can strengthen our self-esteem and work on eliminating or lessening our weak areas.

When you are given your feedback, ask for clarification and use clarifying questions. The intern needs to know what was found to be negative and how that behavior is to be changed. Also, make sure you understand the evaluator's true intent. If you receive negative feedback, follow these five steps to help you get control of the situation and feel more empowered:

1. Recognize that negative feedback is not an attack.
2. Ask for regular feedback.
3. Give yourself time to process your emotions.
4. See the feedback from the evaluator's perspective.
5. Handle constructive or destructive feedback accordingly.

Seeking Feedback Licenses and Attributions

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8.5 Imagining the Future and Creating a Plan

Hopefully, you are confident with the choice you made in seeking this profession as a career. What does the future hold for you? It holds many possibilities if you are diligent and prepared to be seen as a professional. The **internship** experience is an invaluable opportunity to apply your acquired knowledge to real practical experiences that include day-to-day job duties and the challenges that come with them. You now have some work experience that can demonstrate your ability to handle responsibilities to potential employers. The next step after the internship is creating a plan. The following suggestions are designed to prepare you for your ultimate goal – employment.

Reading, Researching, and Reflecting

For some, reading is for entertainment, but for the Human Services professional, it is part of the job. As long as you are practicing in the field, you will be reading case studies, reports, newsletters and continuing education courses for licensing requirements, exploring current literature on trends and **laws**, etc.

Reflecting on what you have learned, what you still need to learn, the need to break bad habits you found while in your internship, and other profession-related issues needing more attention are things you will be reviewing.

Evaluate your current preparation for starting your career:

- Look at where you are and where you need to be by going over your documents.
- Go over your goals and expectations and ask yourself if you've met them. Also, look at new skills developed, your supervisor's final **evaluation** listing your strengths and weaknesses, and feedback from colleagues.
- Create a professional portfolio. The portfolio is your passport to success. In the portfolio, you need to include your internship progress reports, projects you participated in, and documents you have that validate your internship

and training. Include letters of recommendation and list your professional contacts and permission to use them as references. Get all your recommendation letters before you leave your internship.

- Create a résumé. List all your new skills and accomplishments, and list all the special training you received.

Re-Education or Ongoing Education

Once you have completed your internship, you can take the experience to inform the direction you go in the future. You may decide that the area your internship was in is the field you want to pursue. You may decide that the work does not quite match your goals, and you'd like to focus elsewhere.

Depending on the field you decide upon, you will probably need either more education or ongoing training. For example, substance use counselors in Oregon can begin working in the field after meeting a minimum of education hours but will still need to complete supervised practice hours and pass an exam to become certified. Other areas, such as family therapy, most often require a master's-level degree. Make sure to talk to your mentors and instructors about the path you've chosen. They will often have great advice about the best path to take.

Creating Balance

Balance is one of those words we hear all the time, but pay little attention to because we believe we are in control or on top of it. What is balance? Simply put, it is the equilibrium between two things or living life in moderation. The latter is more than likely the one we have to monitor.

Many people divide their day into work and play, with little attention focused on the in-between times. For instance, you need time to rest, to care for yourself, to tend to your home life, and to get errands done, and when does all that get done between work and play?

You know you only have 8 hours for work, 8 hours for sleep, and that leaves you another 8 hours to get the rest of your needs met. Create a calendar and set up a regular routine so you do not burn out. Pencil in "fun times" and "**self-care** time." Always discuss with your family your schedule so they know what your day looks like and what they can and cannot expect from you.

Imagining the Future and Creating a Plan Licenses and Attributions

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8.6 Conclusion

This chapter focused on several aspects of the **internship**. Key topics were emphasized due to their relevance to your identity development as a Human Services worker. Several concepts were introduced regarding the **ethics** and standards of the Human Services profession as well as standard ethics from a philosophical perspective. Along with ethics and expectations of the client-professional relationship, self-building concepts were included to reinforce positive regard for the self, along with strategies for **self-care**.

It is not always easy to prepare someone to enter a field that is very challenging due to the population it serves. However, it is possible to provide

them with the basic tools and concepts that can be expanded to include more complex capabilities as the need arises. The **communication** skills, as well as the utilization of journals, peers, mentors, and other professionals, contribute major support to the intern during difficult times.

You started this journey of self-exploration through the internship process, noting some of the advantages of internships but also some of the challenges you were likely to face. Looking at the sections of the chapter, you should have recog-

nized areas of strengths and weaknesses but, as you probably know, we are always changing and improving ourselves as we grow older and more experienced.

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8.7 Practice

Journal Prompts

1. Think about your first day at your **internship**. How have you changed and grown?
2. What are the unique qualities and skills you bring to the profession, and how can they help you and hinder you?
3. What type of feedback have you received from your supervisor, colleagues, instructor, and classmates? How will you incorporate this feedback in the future?
4. What experiences have you not yet experienced that you need to feel well-rounded as a service provider?
5. Imposter syndrome is a phrase used to describe the feeling of "not fitting in" described by many new professionals, especially those who come from marginalized backgrounds. The video **Imposter Syndrome Is A Scheme: Reshma Saujani's Smith College Commencement Address** challenges the concept. Watch the video and reflect on your own feelings about your fit at your agency or in human services.

Self-Care Activities

1. Gratitude List. Giving thanks or being grateful has a long history of being a positive action. However, recent research has shown that simply expressing our gratitude in writing can improve our sense of happiness, well-being, and self-esteem (Simons, 2020; Yang, 2018; Shourie 2016). Gratitude is more than just saying thank you but observing to identify what we are truly grateful for. Positive psychology suggests that people who are more grateful have higher levels of subjective well-being, which has several benefits, such as being more optimistic by focusing more on positive things to prevent pessimism. Create a list of at least three things you are grateful for at the end of each day for a week. You can write more than three if you would like. At the end of the week, reflect on how keeping this gratitude list affected you. Keeping a daily gratitude journal may be a **self-care** activity you would like to adopt.
2. Sharing Your Gratitude. Your Gratitude List is where you listed the things you have or have

received and are grateful for having. There are studies that suggest that, in addition to the benefits of keeping a gratitude list, there are extra benefits from sharing your gratitude with others (O'Connell, 2017). Sharing your gratitude can increase the positive impact on mood and self-esteem. If you are comfortable doing so, share a few of your items with people around you. Again, reflect on how this activity affected your mood. You may want to add sharing your gratitude to your self-care list.

Class Discussion Topics

1. How will you know you're gaining **compe-**tence? Think back to the beginning of your internship. Make a list of the skills you have learned over your time at the agency. What did you find most helpful in learning these? In what ways are you more confident in your role as a helper? Share this information in pairs or small groups.

2. What are your areas for growth, and who can help you grow? What plans can you make to help you continue to learn?

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Preparing for Termination and Evaluation

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9.1 Chapter Overview

Ending an **internship** is a process, not just a single event that happens on the final day. The process of completing an internship can be both exciting and sad, meaning you may have mixed feelings about leaving. If so, that is known as "separation anxiety" and is entirely normal. In fact, having mixed feelings is often a sign of a good internship because, in that case, one is happy to move on but sad that

many positive relationships may be ending. In this sense, the ending of an internship is more than just an end date. Internships often serve as a capstone of your learning that gives you a chance to show what you've learned and develop your professional and academic goals.

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9.2 Self-Evaluation

An important part of experiential learning is what you learn about yourself. Being able to look back on your experience and evaluate your learning provides valuable information for you to build on. We often focus on external evaluations—what our supervisor or instructor tells us about our performance. They can speak to what they observed, but you are the best judge to assess what you have learned individually and how you have changed internally.

Self-**evaluation** can often help you see your accomplishments more clearly, as well as your challenges (figure 9.1). Both of these will be meaningful as you create a professional path forward.

Figure 9.1 Reflecting on your own performance is an important part of the evaluation process.

Self-Reflection Versus Self-Criticism

Self-reflection is essential throughout an **internship** because this process allows you to notice your style, make adjustments, see your growth, and learn how to better take care of your most valuable tool in human services work—namely, yourself. However, this type of evaluation plays a more prominent role as the internship draws to a close. Naturally, endings invite people to reminisce, evaluate, and reflect on the experience.

Hopefully, there were parts of the internship that were enjoyable. Perhaps you notice a substantial increase in both your **competence** and **confidence**. Of course, it is also likely that some awkward or unpleasant things happened as well. They are probably best understood as "side effects" of the learning process as they often involve making mistakes or working through a difficult period. Useful self-assessments do require a certain degree of honesty about yourself and your contributions during the internship—good, bad, and in-between. Being honest in this way also helps one to discover new insights and learn from the successes and mistakes made during the internship.

This type of openness to your experience is also essential for identifying the skills you have, as well as those that you need to acquire or refine. Being honest with yourself, including not being over-critical, often helps people see and appreciate the strengths and weaknesses of their styles. Accurate **self-assessment** can also provide paths to discovering your real interests, talents, values, and abilities. Even an unexciting and unsatisfying internship can be helpful in this regard because sometimes learning what you do not like is important, too. Both positive and negative internship experiences can help you find your way to a satisfying career path.

An excellent place to start in the self-evaluation process would be to reflect on the beginning of the internship, back when you were looking for a site. The internship site is supposed to allow you to start getting the experience you need to become a good human services professional. Looking back to the very beginning of your internship experience enables you to see how far you have come and reflect on what skills you have learned.

Another part of the self-evaluation process can be to identify significant events, interactions, and other "lessons" you experienced or learned at the agency. These types of phenomena are "teachable" (or, more appropriately, "learnable") moments. Often, they are the times you discover some things of real value, such as a skill, a way of speaking or presenting yourself, or even clues that foreshadow something that is likely to occur.

Endings are also a good time for reflection. Understanding how you respond to separation will help you deal with the inevitable conclusion of the internship. The most important thing is to deal with this part of the transition with a reasonable degree of tact, honesty, and optimism, as these characteristics may make the transition easier for all parties. Of course, people tend to handle emotions in their own ways. Some individuals may have a harder time leaving the internship site because of the bonds they have formed while working there.

A positive way to view these feelings is to remember that you could be moving on to bigger and better things. There are other bonds to be made and more clients that need assistance from human services professionals. Recognizing your feelings allows you to be aware of your compassion as you work in that specialized field. A good self-assessment can help you discover your clinical interests, which can facilitate your professional development.

You Don't Know What You Don't Know

An often overlooked part of self-reflection is listening to feedback from others. When I ask students how they can elicit feedback from clients or colleagues, they will respond with, "Ask them!" The truth is, you are probably already getting feedback *if you just pay attention and listen*. As we discussed in **Chapter 8**, seeking and reflecting on feedback is an important part of your professional growth.

Self-reflection can give you a pause to think about the feedback you have received over your time at the agency. Of course, not every piece of feedback is of equal importance. Some clients will like us better than others, and you may have a closer relationship with some colleagues than others. What you are listening for is consistent feedback that you might be getting from multiple sources.

A good question to ask yourself is, "Is this feedback that I have heard from others before?" One of my former colleagues described it more eloquently: "If one person calls you a jackass, ignore them. If three different people call you a jackass, get a saddle." People are probably giving you information you can learn from if you tune in and listen. This requires both slowing down our response to feedback and being more open to criticism. Reflecting on the feedback can give us new insights that will help us in the future.

It is important to think of feedback and performance as a continuous loop of improvement. Each bit of feedback you receive over your internship (and career) gives you a chance to improve your skills. The Plan-Do-Check-Act cycle (seen in figure 9.2) shows how each cycle of learning can improve upon the last. For more information, check out the **American Society for Quality website.**
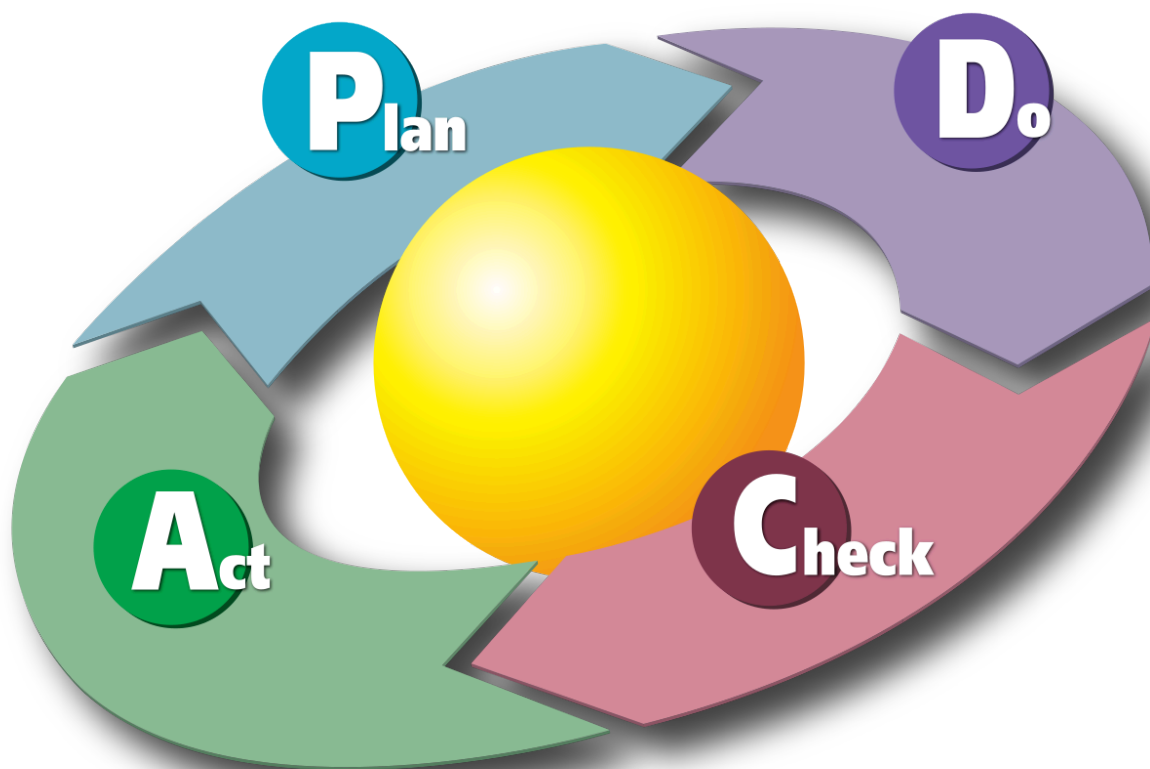
Figure 9.2 The Plan-Do-Check-Act cycle.

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"You Don't Know What You Don't Know" written by Yvonne M. Smith LCSW under **CC BY 4.0**.

Figure 9.1. "A South Asian person in a wheelchair looks thoughtfully to the side while taking notes. She is backlit by the window she's in front of and wearing a teal shirt with black pants and shoes." by Chona Kasinger from the **Disabled and Here** project is licensed under **CC BY 4.0**.

Figure 9.2 "PDCA Cycle" by **Karn Bulsuk** from **Wikimedia Commons** is licensed under **CC BY 3.0**.

9.3 Performance Evaluation/Supervisory Evaluation

Some internships include formal evaluations for your supervisor to fill out before you finish at the site. They may even play a part in the grade you will receive for the course. Few people like being assessed by others, so it is essential that during this process, you remain flexible and open to the supervisor's opinions. If the supervisor does not initiate a meeting to discuss the results, you may want to suggest one.

Whether you have a formal or informal performance **evaluation**, some disagreements at this point are common because no two people will see a situation in the same way. Understanding the reasoning behind the supervisor's assessment of your performance will provide valuable information and probably peace of mind as well. You should expect that criticisms are a part of the process, and knowing that possibility in advance can help.

Some individuals find it more difficult to deal with criticism than others. You might want to keep in mind that the site supervisor is trying to help you improve in the areas you are weak. Just remember that the evaluation is not the end of the world. Take a deep breath and listen to what the supervisor has to say. While being critiqued by others can be difficult, it is an effective way to gain insight into your strengths and weaknesses from the point of view of someone with significant field experience.

Seeing how others perceive you can be a valuable source of information, but it is important to remember that many outside factors can influence a supervisor's evaluation, too. For example, supervisors may have a style that clashes with yours. Like you, they can have a busy or a bad day. Moreover, some students have "A-itis," which is to say that they think they must always do exceptionally well or something is wrong with them.

Preparing for Your Final Evaluation

You will likely be participating in some type of formal evaluation as you prepare to end your **internship**. Even if your agency does not do formal evaluations, you will need to complete whatever process is required for your college or university. Whether this includes being graded on your specific learning outcomes, creating a portfolio, or another type of evaluation, there are certain activities that will help you prepare.

Using information from your **self-reflection**, make a list of what you feel are your biggest accomplishments over your time at the agency. Give concrete examples to support your list. Be sure to write down some of the challenges you faced along the way as well, and not only how you dealt with them, but what you learned from that situation. You might also want to review your learning objectives and list examples of how you have accomplished each of them. If there were barriers to completing an objective, note what happened. Finally, include how you will take this experience with you into the future. How has your internship influenced your future plans?

By planning ahead, you should feel comfortable and confident going into your final evaluation. You won't have to try to remember everything that happened during your time at the agency because you will have reviewed this information ahead of time. If there are disagreements about your performance, you will be prepared to support your view with concrete examples and information.

Respectful Self-Advocacy: Being Honest Without Being Rude

Self-advocacy involves the ability to identify your needs and ask for assistance in a confident and respectful manner. As mentioned elsewhere, every internship provides opportunities to learn, regardless of how successful you feel it has been. When internships don't go as planned, we learn information about the agency, the work, and ourselves.

Supervisors will often ask interns for feedback on their experience during a final evaluation. This can make you feel "on the spot" if you haven't thought ahead about this. If you have had a difficult time, it might be tempting to take the opportunity to air all of your grievances. It also may be tempting to smile and say everything was perfect because you don't want to offend. Neither of these responses will be helpful in the long run, either for you, the agency, or future interns.

Being honest about your experience is a critical skill in human services (figure 9.2). Learning how to give feedback honestly and professionally is important in any profession. So, how best to go about this? The following tips can help you craft feedback that is both truthful and respectful.

- Include observations that you feel are strengths of the agency. This shows that you can acknowledge the agency's strengths and weaknesses.
- Be specific about what you feel are issues. For example, instead of saying, "I felt uncomfortable during team meetings," state, "I felt uncomfortable when the case managers used words like 'lazy' and 'hopeless' to describe clients during meetings."
- Offer suggestions or solutions if you can. It helps people absorb a critique if it comes with a solution or a path forward. It also shows that you have thought hard about the issue and are not just complaining. Perhaps you feel like you were asked to work independently with clients without adequate training. You may suggest the agency create a training manual for interns to keep track of what they have learned and any gaps that need to be addressed.

Figure 9.3 Giving feedback can help you, the agency, and future interns.

While it can be helpful to give feedback, it can also feel—and be—risky. You cannot guarantee how the information will be received, and you don't want to create problems for yourself as you begin your career. Here are some cautions to accompany the previous tips:

- Listen to your own intuition about whether or not it is safe to give feedback. If you have already observed that the agency (or your supervisor) is not open to feedback, you are probably not in a position to change that. You may decide to share your observations with your instructor and allow him/her to share them with the agency as they see fit.
- If your concern has to do with safety, make sure you alert your instructor and/or the office that coordinates internships for your school. It is important for them to know if students are being put in dangerous situations.
- As a new professional, you may have been trained in newer methods or use more current language to express your work. This can conflict with colleagues who have a "this is how we've always done it" perspective. You may notice that the wording on their forms is dated and uses language that is not considered culturally appropriate (for example, only being able to choose "male" or "female" for gender). As human service professionals, advocating for social justice is core to our work. If you want to make suggestions, be neutral about your observations and refrain from passing judgment. The goal is to improve services for clients, not prove you are right.

You can also talk to your instructor about your concerns. They can help you put together your thoughts and even role-play with you so you can practice giving your feedback.

9.4 Saying Goodbye

The final stage of ending an **internship** is making the actual separation. Completing an internship can be accompanied by feelings of loss and sadness as well as satisfaction with a job well done as you move closer to achieving your career goals.

Ending relationships with clients may be more challenging because each client is different. Some may be more anxious about the separation and react more strongly to it than others. If you have any concerns about separating from the clients, bring it up with the supervisor as soon as possible. It could be helpful for you to tell the clients a few weeks before your departure to allow the clients more time to prepare for it. Sometimes, for instance, they may need to be referred to another worker or group to maintain continuity of care, and you can play a key role in that process for them.

It is also time to say goodbye to the colleagues with whom you have been working and learning over the past few months. Goodbye does not necessarily mean "the end" because every relationship you establish can become a part of your network. However, endings do mean that interactions will likely be less frequent. Never forget to say thank you to everyone who allowed you to shadow them and to those who supervised you throughout your internship time. You may want to send a thank-you card to a few key people at the agency. This once-common practice has declined in recent years but is still a powerful way of showing respect and leaving people with a positive reminder of you. You want to leave the agency with your relationships and your reputation intact, as opposed to leaving ruined relationships, shoddy performance, or other wreckage (see figure 9.4).

Figure 9.4 How you handle endings in other parts of your life can influence how you end your internship. You don't want to leave an explosion behind you.

Remember, the internship may be one of your most valuable learning experiences in the field of human services and can follow you into the future. Just like ending the internship is a process, so is finishing the classroom part of it. Often, the class will include a final exam, paper, or project.

The last meeting of the class may also signify a change in your relationships with your colleagues, especially if graduation follows. Everything we said about endings so far applies here as well. Indeed, you are likely to have spent meaningful time with your classmates and instructor, who are now your colleagues. Colleagues and instructors can be essential parts of your continuing network as you move forward. For example, you may need a recommendation from your instructor someday, or perhaps one of your fellow students can alert you to a job possibility in the future. Consequently, it makes good sense to have meaningful and positive transitions here as well.

Terminating Relationships with Clients

Termination refers to the formal ending of your relationship with a client. You may have ended (or terminated) your work with some clients throughout your internship, but the end of your placement means terminating all of your client relationships. Even though you knew at the start that the internship must end, you may find yourself handling this transition differently from what you anticipated. For example, while your supervisor and co-workers will likely be aware of your end date at the internship site, your clients may not. Depending on the level of involvement you had with them, the clients must be made aware of your temporary position as a student intern. This awareness may have an impact on the short-term nature of your relationship with them, but providing clients with this information may help them prepare for this inevitable event.

People often do not realize that for many clients, the agency is a significant part of their social life and not just a place to get help. For some, it may be the safest place they know, as in the case of people without housing. For others who live alone and have few close friends or relatives, your rela-

tionship may be the only bright spot in the week, and they look forward to it, perhaps even counting on it, between appointments. The fact that people may be counting on you in this way is another reason regular attendance is so important.

Leaving the Worksite

The end of an internship usually occurs in one of two ways. Traditional endings are the most common. They typically involve a final **evaluation** of some sort, short goodbyes, and little or no future contact with the agency as the contract period ends. Nontraditional endings can take place in several ways. One is when a student is offered a job at the site after the internship ends. Another would be when a student is asked to volunteer after they complete their hours.

Of course, an ending can occur when a student needs to change sites partway through the internship, although that situation is unusual. Positive nontraditional endings can make the ending process for the student intern even more rewarding. For instance, sometimes interns are offered an actual position at the site, which creates a pleasant transition rather than a definite ending. Those who end traditionally can also have a good experience even if there is no job offer. After all, a formal conclusion usually signals that you have done good work and taken another step toward your goals.

In Focus: Reflecting on Endings

Although you may be experiencing mixed emotions about leaving your site, there are many more opportunities in your future career as a human services professional. Right now, however, it is time to say goodbye, and you find yourself struggling with the whole idea of continuing your education and finding someplace to work. Perhaps you may second-guess yourself and wonder if this is the path for you. What can you do to help ease the anxiety you are feeling to carry through with your plans as you say your goodbyes? There are four courses of action you can take. Reflect on them and be sure to identify which one is likely to result in the least benefit.

- Take some time to think about other endings you have experienced (both good and bad) in life. Reflect on them, consider what parts made them difficult, and then realize that more exciting things are on the horizon.
- Think about the internship experience and all the positives you hope to take with you as you continue your education in that field.
- Share the good and bad moments from your internship with your colleagues who shared experiences with you along the way.
- Celebrate the ending, say your goodbyes, and leave.

Saying Goodbye Licenses and Attributions

9.5 Conclusion

Terminating your **internship** represents both an ending and a beginning. You now have a wealth of experience in the field that you didn't have before. You have had a chance to apply the knowledge and skills you learned in the classroom. You have proven that you can perform the very challenging work that is human services. With this strong base, you are ready to build your future.

Conclusion Licenses and Attributions

9.6 Practice

Journal Prompts

1. What are you going to miss the most?
2. What have been your biggest "aha" moments?
3. What surprised you the most?
4. What new areas of growth/learning have you discovered?

Self-Care Activity

1. Practicing gratitude is a very helpful practice, especially when you are feeling stressed or overwhelmed. With your **internship** ending (and graduation possibly looming), you may feel anxious about all of the transition. Taking the time to pause and appreciate the culmination of your internship can give you a sense of grounding and satisfaction to move forward. A great method of doing this is to write thank-you cards to those at your agency who were important to you and your success.

Not only is this a great **self-care** practice, but it is also a great professional habit. Thank-you cards may seem old-fashioned, but they are always appreciated and show the effort put into them. Don't stress about it being perfect. Here are some great sites that give tips on writing professional thank-you notes:

- **Emily Post's Complete Guide to Writing Thank-You Notes**
- **Sample Thank-You Letter for an Internship**

Class Discussion Topics

1. What are your biggest takeaways?
2. How have you left previous jobs/relationships?
3. How can you give feedback to your field supervisor, the agency, colleagues, etc., without burning bridges?
4. How will this experience influence your job search in the future?

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Taking the Next Step

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10.1 Chapter Overview

It is natural to form connections and attachments with people and projects as you advance through various phases of life. As you leave behind rewarding experiences and valued relationships, it will serve you well to remember that change is both natural and inevitable. Growing and evolving requires moving on and attempting new things.

Remember that there are many new and exciting possibilities ahead, like chapters in a book. They offer different opportunities for positive involvement with new people and new paths for you to explore. With each step taken, you will continue to learn more about yourself and your unique style. As a part of this never-ending

process, you will discover things to change or improve on. Your increased self-awareness will help you take the next step in your professional evolution as well. Over time, you will help make the world a better place, especially for your clients and the general public.

Throughout this **internship**, you may have had to overcome personal, economic, and professional challenges. No doubt you made some mistakes, but you learned a lot as well. It is important to remember the failures or at least learn from them so that you do not repeat them. However, positive psychology indicates that there is value in focusing on success as well. It is also important to realize that with each step moving forward, you will encounter a new set of challenges and learn more advanced skills. When you complete the hours necessary for your internship, it is useful to look back again at the time you spent at your site. Think of the people you met and the things you learned. If you are not going on to a job, you might consider volunteering to work in another agency in the field. Volunteering in a variety of settings that interest you might be an excellent way to develop a better sense of what you would like to do while at the same time adding to your network and **résumé**.

Now the formal **evaluation** is over, the good-byes are done, and you have completed your class. No matter where you were at the beginning of the course, you have improved as a professional and perhaps as a person. It is now time to reward yourself in whatever ways are meaningful to you.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After reading this chapter, you will be able to do the following:
· Integrate learning into practice
· Apply personal DEI lens to current human service practice

PREVIEW OF KEY TERMS

· Diversity: the practice or quality of including or involving people from a range of different social and ethnic backgrounds and of different genders, sexual orientations, etc., that may or may not intersect with each other.
· Equity: the quality of being fair and impartial and providing equitable access to different perspectives and resources to all students.
· Inclusion: the practice or quality of providing equal access to opportunities and resources for people who might otherwise systemically be excluded or marginalized, such as those who have physical or mental disabilities and members of other minority groups.
· Networking: the continuous development of a supportive system of sharing information and connections between individuals and groups that share common interests.
· Résumé: a summary of your experience, knowledge, and skills that demonstrates your ability to perform the job for which you are applying.

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10.2 Integrating New Knowledge

Many of you are now focusing on graduation and next steps. Some of you may have some classwork to finish up before moving on. Either way, your field experience has given you a new lens through which to view your knowledge. It is important to be intentional about processing this experience and using it as a building block in your human ser- vices foundation. Whether you are going straight into the field, or pursuing a higher degree, hope- fully, this experience can inform where you go and how you see your work. It is time to create your pathway to the future and build it upon your academic and field experience (figure 10.1).

Figure 10.1 Now it is time to take your experiences and look to the future.

Revisiting Your Equity Lens and Practice

A primary focus of this text is centering **equity** throughout the chapters. An understanding of **diversity**, equity, and **inclusion** is key to becoming an effective worker in the field. The Ethical Standards of the National Organization for Human Services refer to these areas multiple times. Standards 10–18 focus on the human service professional's responsibility to the public and society. These standards include providing services without discrimination, awareness of and respect for diverse cultures, and an understanding of how social and political issues impact communities differently.

Furthermore, Standard 16 states explicitly the need for action in addition to awareness:

> STANDARD 16 Human service professionals advocate for social justice and seek to eliminate **oppression**. They raise awareness of underserved populations in their communities and with the legislative system.

Our profession is grounded in social justice, but many organizations have lost that focus due to bureaucracy, funding, staff overturn, and other factors. Bringing your **equity lens** provides an opportunity to recommit to the original vision of the human services profession. You now have the knowledge, skills, and vision to turn your awareness into action.

Building on Your Foundation

With your knowledge, skills, and experience, it is time to focus on the future you want to create. This includes acknowledging the work you have done as well as being able to articulate this to others. While you may "know" internally how much you have learned, part of building your foundation includes being able to describe and demonstrate your growth to potential universities and employers. We will be discussing some specific strategies in the next section, but there are some things you can think about ahead of time that can prepare you for your next steps.

Referring to your journal can help you reflect on some of these key areas. Here are some prompts to get you started:

- What do you think are the top 5 areas of growth for you during your academic program? What are some examples that demonstrate these areas?
- What have you learned about yourself through your program and **internship**? How can you apply this to your work going forward?
- Have you had to change your worldview regarding certain issues? How? How will you use this new knowledge in your profession?

These are just a few ideas to get you started. Thinking ahead and being able to put these experiences into words can help you communicate how you would be a benefit to the agency or university.

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Figure 10.1. is adapted from **Plant-covered walkway crossing a pond in Shinjuku Gyoen National Garden a sunny day with blue sky Tokyo Japan** by **Basile Morin** is licensed under **CC BY-SA 4.0**.

10.3 Where to Go from Here

As you finish up your **internship**, you may have several different paths ahead of you. Some of you will still have coursework to complete your program. Some of you will be transferring to another college or university to continue your studies. Others may have just completed a terminal degree and plan to enter the workforce upon completion.

In this section, we will focus on those of you who are leaving your human services program and are heading directly into the workforce, either full-time or part-time. Even if you are going on to higher education, the following discussions can be helpful when you do eventually start seeking professional employment. You can begin using many of the strategies, such as **networking**, creating a professional résumé, and interviewing skills, even while you are still in school. It can be beneficial to be prepared in advance—you might be making a contact now that could lead to an internship or job opportunity down the line.

Job Seeking and Networking

The process of finding a job and getting hired has changed drastically over the last 20 years or so. Most processes have gone online, and there is a proliferation of job listings and job-matching websites. Many people consider your online profile to be a key determinant of career success. However, networking continues to be a very important asset when it comes to connecting with potential employers.

The first place to start with job searching is your college or university's career center. They often have resources for students, including **résumé** writing and interview skills. They often compile lists of current job opportunities that are sent to the college by employers seeking graduates. Avail yourself of these services if you can, and attend any career fairs that include human service settings. Alumni offices can also be a good source of information and possible contacts at local agencies.

The internet can also provide a wealth of resources for job seekers. There are job-posting sites such as Monster, Indeed, and ZipRecruiter that list thousands of jobs. Government agencies often have extensive job listings on their own sites. Some professional organizations also post an online job board to connect professionals to job opportunities. For example, in Oregon, the **Mental Health and Addictions Credentialing Board posts a searchable list** of jobs in mental health and substance use treatment. The **Oregon Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers also lists jobs**, including positions for qualified candidates with associate's or bachelor's degrees. This wealth of postings can be overwhelming, and it can make it difficult to identify the right match for you.

In addition to these sources, by far one of the most powerful tools for job-seekers is their own professional networking. When it comes to employment opportunities, there is an old and worn-out saying: "It's not what you know, but who you know." While this approach does have issues when it comes to access and **inclusion**, every student can take advantage of creating and utilizing their own personal professional network. As an instructor, I encourage students from the beginning of their education to take advantage of any trainings or presentations in the community that cover an area of interest. Each one of these sessions represents an opportunity to connect with other professionals in the field.

If you want to reinforce how the site is a part of your network, make sure that the supervisor has an updated copy of your résumé (both electronic and hard copy) when you leave. After all, that indi-

vidual will have contacts with other supervisors or agencies, and having a copy makes it easier to pass along when you are looking for jobs.

Professional Résumés

Another important tool in your job search will be an updated résumé. Again, your college or university probably has a career center that can help you craft a professional-looking résumé. While there are many free résumé templates available on the internet, it is important that your résumé is designed to highlight your particular strengths and experiences. How you structure your résumé will depend a great degree on how your education and degree fit into your work history.

When you have little paid experience, you will want to make sure to emphasize your internship. You will want to go into detail about what skills you performed and how you increased your level of knowledge and expertise over your time at the agency. Your degree and your internship will be key in showing how you qualify for the positions for which you are applying.

If you have a previous work history in a field unrelated to human services, there are a few tips for updating your résumé. In this situation, your degree and internship will serve to show your commitment to switching careers and your desire to work in the human services field. Your internship will again give you a chance to highlight your new skills and experience. For your previous work history, you will want to focus on what is referred to as transferable skills. This means that regardless of what field you were in previously, it is likely that you performed tasks or demonstrated skills that are applicable to human services.

You may already have a résumé from your previous career. In this case, you will probably need to rewrite each of your position descriptions to focus on these transferable skills. Having read many résumés over my years in the field, I can say that this is the area that many applicants skip, and it leaves prospective employers having to guess how your previous experience is relevant to their agency and position. See the following boxed section for examples of how to do this.

If you already have human services experience, then your résumé should feature your new degree as a step in an already developing career path. You will probably not need to include as much detail about your internship experience since you will be demonstrating some of those elements in your previous position descriptions. Instead, focus solely on those skills or responsibilities that are new and different or show a higher level of complexity than previous positions.

No matter what type of résumé you are creating, I suggest having at least two people review it for grammar and spelling. These may seem like small issues, but mistakes on a résumé can make the difference between getting an interview or not.

In Focus: Creating a Skills-Focused Résumé

Indeed.com lists the top 11 skills that employers are looking for. This list includes (in order from 1–11): **Communication** skills, Leadership skills, Teamwork Skills, Interpersonal skills, Learning/Adaptability skills, Self-management skills, Organizational skills, Computer skills, Problem-solving skills, Open-mindedness, and a Strong Work Ethic. These skills can be learned and demonstrated in a variety of professional settings.

I often work with students who have several years of experience in a different field, and they struggle to connect their work to the human services arena. The truth is, you can showcase your skills and strengths regardless of the field you worked in. Here are some examples to get you thinking. Remember that your college career center and your practicum instructor can provide helpful input.

- Restaurant experience—whether you worked in a fast food restaurant, a coffee shop, or a high-end bistro, you have great experience working with people. Instead of focusing on tasks (seated guests, took orders, bussed tables, fulfilled drive-thru orders) focus on the skills you used in that position, such as interacting with the public; keeping your composure in a high-pressure, high-volume environment; problem-solving with unhappy (or even angry) patrons; working effectively as part of a team; and so on.
- Manufacturing or production work—you may not think you have any relevant experience if you worked in a factory or warehouse. Again, focus on the skills, which might include meeting deadlines, a high degree of accuracy, dependability, working independently and/or as part of a team, problem-solving when issues arise, and so on.

Referring to these examples and the list from Indeed.com, make a list of skills that might be demonstrated in the following jobs (you can do this independently or in groups):

- Preschool Assistant
- Truck Driver
- Retail Sales
- IT Assistant

Share your list with others and see how they compare. This should give you some ideas about how to frame your own experience to appeal to human services hiring managers.

Interviewing Skills

Employers use interviews to gauge whether you have the qualities to perform the job well. They are looking for ability and aptitude, a willingness to work and learn, a desire to help accomplish the organization's goals, and maturity and compatibility. For the most part, the interviewer will already have established that you have the minimum training and experience for the job by reading your résumé. However, this is your opportunity to tell them about your unique background and how it fits with their position. There are lots of sites that have general advice about interviewing. In this section, we will focus on making your field experience work for you during an interview.

Questions to Anticipate

You should be prepared to answer a list of questions the interviewer(s) will ask. The list below is a sample of the most common interview questions. Even if these are not the exact questions that will be asked, you should rehearse the subject matter so you have a well-rounded, complete answer to provide when the question is asked.

There are important steps you can take before the interview. Make sure you have read the entire job description, not just the job title and salary. Know what will be expected of you in the position. Also, make sure to review the agency's website. This can give you valuable information about the **culture** of an agency, as well as its mission and values.

1. Can you tell me something about yourself? This is usually an invitation to talk about yourself on a personal but not intimate level. Stress such points as your educational background, length of time spent in the community, work with community groups, hobbies,

and interests. Avoid sharing overly personal details, such as relationship status, political affiliation, or religious participation. End by focusing on your work experience, work values, aptitudes, and qualities and how these are relevant to the job in question.

2. Why do you want to work here? The best way to prepare for this question is to do some research on the agency. You may want to refer to awards the agency has won or something about the agency's mission or goals that appeal to you. You can also use this question to tie your education and field experience directly to the position you are seeking.

3. What are your strengths? Your strengths should present you as an efficient and committed worker who can perform the job competently. Other strengths required in every job are honesty, dependability, enthusiasm, and cooperation. Mention them if appropriate. It also can be helpful to prepare a few examples of how you use these strengths in your work. For example, you may consider your attention to detail a strength and state that you received high marks from your **fieldwork** supervisor for your clear and accurate case notes.

4. What are your weaknesses or limitations? This question may sometimes be phrased in more subtle ways, such as "What are some areas in which you can improve?", "How have you grown over the past few years?", or "Where do you see yourself needing to grow in the next few years?" We all have challenges or areas in which we need growth. Having the self-awareness to be able to discuss your own challenges shows employers that you are committed to continued learning and growth.

Focus on areas that are related to your professional life rather than your personal life. When you mention a challenge or limitation, you can also discuss how you are aware of it and any steps you have already put in place to work towards

strengthening that area. For example, you may find it difficult to say no to clients, and you can mention observing how other workers manage this dilemma and beginning to practice those techniques. Think ahead of an area you will be comfortable sharing, and don't be surprised if you are asked some follow-up questions. Using a strength disguised as a weakness ("I work too hard", "I often expect others to give the same level of energy to a task as I do") is an obvious technique to most interviewers and can come across as insincere.

Questions You Can Ask

Asking some questions yourself in the interview demonstrates that you have **confidence** in your abilities and that you are genuinely interested in the job and in the company. Here are some common questions that show your interest in the agency and the position:

1. Do you have any questions about my résumé?
2. Can you tell me more about the responsibilities of this job?
3. What possibilities are there for promotion and advancement?

4. When will you make your decision about this job?
5. What training opportunities do you have for employees?

Thinking ahead about these questions and thinking of examples of your work you can share will help you feel relaxed and confident during the interview.

Where to Go from Here Licenses and Attributions

10.4 Conclusion

Congratulations on completing your **internship**! We hope this text has been a helpful guide as you learned to perform one of the most challenging aspects of human services—putting your knowledge and theories into practice. Think of all of the different experiences you have had at your agency as tools for your toolbox. You are now prepared for your next steps, whether in education or in the field, with experience in actually doing the work. You have seen the challenges faced by clients, workers, and agencies alike as all of us together try to address people's needs. We wish you the best as you continue your journey.

Conclusion Licenses and Attributions

10.5 Practice

Journal Prompts

1. How has your DEI lens grown and changed throughout the practicum experience? How will you apply this new knowledge in the future?
2. Think about your goals for yourself and how you hope to impact the field of human services. Create a goal statement for what you hope to accomplish in the next 1–3 years as you begin your career.

Self-Care Activity

1. Mindfulness, Looking Forward: We have focused on a different **self-care** activity in each chapter of this text. However, as we discussed in **Chapter 9**, not all of these activities will feel like the right fit for you. This chapter's activity asks you to put together a self-care package that you can take with you into the future. The best way to prevent **burnout** in the human services field is to practice self-care before the symptoms of burnout even start. Make a list of the self-care activities that you found helpful, adding other activities that you have found helpful in the past. Keep this list handy, and try to practice at least one of them weekly. Keeping in mind that self-care is a highly individual concept, journaling has been found to have beneficial effects for self-care and self-esteem. If keeping a journal feels like just another chore, you might try a gratitude journal, in which you note daily just 1–2 things that you are grateful for that day.

Class Discussion Topics

1. What are your fears regarding job seeking?
2. What excites you about job seeking?
3. How will you describe your strengths in your **résumé**, cover letters, and in interviews?
4. What is the best advice you can give your classmates for interviews?

Practice Licenses and Attributions

10.6 References

Indeed Editorial Team. (2023, February 3). Top 11 skills employers look for in job candidates. https://www.indeed.com/career-advice/resumes-cover-letters/skills-employers-look-for

Glossary

Accountability partner

a colleague who supports you to achieve a certain goal or follow through on a commitment.

Accreditation

the process of the organization being evaluated by an independent third party entity for conformity to and compliance with a specific set of industry standards.

Apprenticeship

a formal type of experiential learning usually ending in an examination and a specific credential or acknowledgement as a professional in the field.

Board of directors

a governing body of individuals who have been elected, selected, or appointed to oversee an organization.

Boundaries

the ability to determine our own safe zones to our emotions. Keeping separate needs, desires, thoughts, and feelings from those of others. In the human services context, boundaries most often refer to keeping our needs and wants separate from those of our clients.

Burnout

the feeling of emotional and/or physical exhaustion brought on by work-related stress.

Code of ethics

the collection of behavior standards adopted by a profession or agency

Communication

the verbal, and non-verbal exchange of information between two or more people.

Compassion fatigue

the feeling of being unable to respond with empathy or compassion to client issues, usually accompanied by feelings of exhaustion or being overwhelmed.

Competence

the ability to perform successfully the duties and activities of your profession.

Confidence

the belief that you can be successful when presented with a challenge.

Confidentiality

spoken, written, and behavioral communication practices designed to provide and maintain an individual's or group's privacy. Includes licensing and HIPAA requirements.

Constructive criticism

feedback designed to help the listener improve their performance.

Continuous personal improvement

the need to be current by participating in training and activities that promote professional and personal growth.

Countertransference

a professional's unconscious feelings and behaviors aroused by a client, patient, consumer of services, or even a supervisor. Countertransference is natural and may be positive or negative in its tone. It is often unrelated to the specific client but brought on by some reminder of a previous relationship.

CROWN Act

an act to protect hairstyles from racial discrimination

CSHSE Standards

The Council on Standards in Human Services Education is the accrediting body for post-secondary human services programs that provides guidelines for programs across the United States.

Cultural humility

approaching clients with respect and curiosity regarding differences in cultural background and/or practices

Culture

the shared beliefs, customs and rituals of a group of people

Diversity

the practice or quality of including or involving people from a range of different social and ethnic backgrounds and of different genders, sexual orientations, etc. that may or may not intersect with each other.

Documentation

the written record of the interactions between the client and the agency, as well as work done by the agency for the client's behalf. Documentation often exists as part of an agency's official records, and may also be used for billing purposes.

Dual relationships

a relationship between a human services worker and another person or group that involves a conflict of interest. Common examples include dating a client, or using a client for the clinician's own personal or financial gain

Equity

the quality of being fair and impartial and providing equitable access to different perspectives and resources to all students.

Equity lens

a way of looking at and acting on issues of justice to ensure that outcomes in the conditions of well-being are improved for marginalized groups, lifting outcomes for all.

Ethical dilemmas

situations in which you are faced with unclear choices about how to handle a situation with a client. This may be a difference between your ethical guidelines and another's, a conflict between your personal and professional ethics, or a clash between two competing ethical standards.

Ethics

Ethics are a code of morals or a philosophy that guides an individual's behaviors and actions. Ethics also include a set of standards or code of conduct set forth by a company or profession.

Evaluation

any method of measuring performance at your position. This may include informal methods, such as check-ins or discussions, or more formal evaluations such a report or grade.

Fieldwork

(or internship/practicum) experiential learning contained within human services programs. For the purposes of this text, fieldwork, internship, and practicum will be used interchangeably.

Fiscal solvency

An agency's ability to service any debt and meet its other financial obligations.

**Health Insurance Portability and Account-
ability Act (HIPAA)**

A federal law enacted in 1996 to improve the portability of health care information, protect the privacy of individuals' personal health information, and ensure that all health information and data is securely stored.

Implicit bias

attitudes or stereotypes that affect our understanding, decisions, and actions in an unconscious manner.

Inclusion

the practice or quality of providing equal access to opportunities and resources for people who might otherwise systemically be excluded or marginalized, such as those who have physical or mental disabilities and members of other minority groups.

Inequity

a difference in the distribution or allocation of a resource between groups.

Internship

A credit class in which students apply theory to practice by using what you have learned in coursework in a real-world setting with a supervisor/mentor who is invested in your growth and development (often also referred to as fieldwork or practicum).

Intersectionality

inequalities produced by simultaneous and intertwined social identities and how that influences the life course of an individual or group.

Laws

the rules a country, state, or other governing body sets, maintains, and enforces. Violations of laws are illegal and can be punished by fines, probation, or incarceration. In the United States, there is a hierarchical structure for authority: federal, state, county, and local.

Learning agreement

A document created by the student, instructor and work supervisor that outlines the goals and objectives for the student's learning during the internship or field experience.

Managing up

the practice of using the traits of the identified leader to help you be productive.

Mentoring

guidance and support given from a professional already in the field.

Mission statement

the formal summary of why an organization exists, who they serve, and how they are unique.

Networking

the continuous development of a supportive system of sharing information and connections between individuals and groups that share common interests

Oppression

the social act of placing severe restrictions on an individual group, or institution.

Organizational charts

charts that demonstrate who in the agency is responsible for specific duties, who reports to whom, and how the work of the agency is organized

Organizational culture

a shared set of beliefs and actions that are supported by the structure of the organization, strategies used, and policies

Overidentification

the inability to differentiate between one's own life, work and challenges and those of a client (or clients).

Privilege

the concept that minority groups do not generally benefit equally from opportunities afforded to the dominant group.

Racial equality

a process of eliminating racial disparities and improving outcomes for everyone.

Regulations

the rules a governing body sets, maintains, and enforces. Violations may result in fines and loss of licensure or certifications.

Resumé

a summary of your experience, knowledge and skills that demonstrates your ability to perform the job for which you are applying

Self-advocacy

the ability to speak up for one's desires and needs.

Self-assessment

an informal self-evaluation of your work performance, and/or personal growth used for appraising strengths and weaknesses and developing strategies for improvement.

Self-care

any activity you participate in whose function is to nourish you either physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually.

Self-reflection

time taken to review your experience and process what you learned.

SHARP framework

a method of defining and understanding the different elements involved in creating and maintaining poverty

SMART goals

Specific, written objectives that demonstrate and measure your learning in the field.

Social work

A practice-based profession and an academic discipline that promotes social change and development, social cohesion, and the empowerment and liberation of people

Sociology

the study of social life, social change, and the social causes and consequences of human behavior.

Statutes

a law written by a legislative body.

Strategic planning

Outlines the steps and processes involved in incorporating an agency's mission, vision, and values into their day to day activities.

Supervisory style

the manner in which a supervisor is most comfortable interacting with interns.

Termination

the act of ending a relationship. Termination in human services generally refers to the methods used by workers to end relationships with clients.

Theory to practice

the opportunity to apply concepts learned through formal coursework to real-life practice settings.

Tokenism

the symbolic involvement of a person in an organization due only to a specified or salient characteristic (e.g., gender, race/ethnicity, disability, age). It refers to a policy or practice of treating members of a minority, underrepresented, or disadvantaged group differently, often assuming the individual is an expert about their particular identity group.

Toxic Positivity

responding to negative events with a positive or happy effect, regardless of how you actually feel about the situation

Transference

a client's unconscious positive or negative feelings or behaviors triggered by another, often the therapist or clinician. The response often is unrelated to the actual professional, but it due to a previous issue in the life of the client

Vision statement

the formal summary of what an agency or organization wants to achieve.

Vulnerable populations

the disadvantaged sub-segment of the community requiring utmost care.

Attributions and References for Glossary Terms

"Confidentiality" definition is from "Glossary" in "**Succeeding at Your Internship: A Handbook Written for and with Students**" by Christopher J. Mruk, and John C. Moor, Bowling Green State University Libraries. This work is licensed under **CC BY NC SA 4.0**.

Implicit bias definition is from the Kirwan Institute **Implicit Bias Module Series Transcripts**

Intersectionality definition is from the **Open Sociology Dictionary**

Oppression definition is from the University of Michigan School of Social Work in **What is Privilege, Oppression, Diversity and Social Justice?**

Racial equity definition is from Race Forward in **What is Racial Equity?**

Social work definition is from the International Federation of Social Workers in **Global Definition of Social Work**

Sociology definition is from the American Sociological Association in **What Is Sociology?**

Tokenism definition is from the Encyclopedia of Counseling in **Tokenism**

Image Descriptions

Image Description for Figure 4.2

Six concentric circles show the ecological systems by level of generality with the individual in the middle. Each circle is also connected to the next largest and next smallest circle with two-headed arrows, indicating a bidirectional relationship between all levels.

Inner circle shows a Black girl with pigtails. Her attributes include:

- Attachment
- Racial-ethnic identity
- Internal working model

Second circle shows the attributes of this girl's microsystem, which include:

- Mentors
- Spiritual community
- Teachers
- Social media
- Health providers
- Parents
- Peers

Third circle shows the mesosystem which is visualized with two arrows showing the connections among the elements of the microsystem.

Fourth circle shows the attributes of this girl's exosystem, which include:

- Neighbors
- Foster care system
- Physical and mental health systems
- Parent's workplace
- Extended family and fictive kin
- School system
- Juvenile justice system
- Mass media

Fifth circle shows the attributes of this girl's macrosystem, which include:

- Systemic racism
- Cultural strengths
- Colorism
- Public policy

Sixth circle shows the attributes of this girl's chronosystem, which include:

- Black Lives Matter Movement
- Historical and intergenerational trauma

Image Description for Figure 4.3

The SHARP framework helps interns assess and address the impacts of poverty on delivering human services. Some questions help the intern identify historical and structural factors that impact the client's presenting condition. Other questions focus on how the intern will act, such as identifying strengths, leveraging power, or maintaining the status quo. It is easy to oversimplify client issues, and the SHARP framework helps orient interns to the structural and historical context in which services are provided.

Image Description for Figure 4.4

A wheel with three rings divided into sections of attributes.

Inner ring shows individual characteristics. Attributes include:

- Values
- Beliefs
- Motivations
- Skills
- Behaviors
- Goals

Middle ring shows social identities. Attributes include:

- Nationality
- First Language
- Religion
- Ability
- Neurodiversity
- Health
- Body size
- Age
- Sex
- Gender
- Sexuality
- Race
- Culture

- Ethnicity
- Socioeconomic Status (SES)
- Geography

Outer Ring shows roles and relationships. Attributes include:

- Job
- Hobbies
- Family
- Friendships
- Professional
- Interests

Transcripts

Transcript for Figure 8.2, Imposter Syndrome Is A Scheme: Reshma Saujani's Smith College Commencement Address

[Crowd cheering.]

Madam President, I have the honor to present Reshma Saujani the degree of Doctor of Humane Letters Honoris Causa.

[Audience cheering and applauding.]

[Kathleen McCartney, President, Smith College]: Reshma Saujani, activist and founder of Girls Who Code.

[Audience cheering and applauding.]

A leading activist for gender equality. You have exposed some of this country's most glaring inequities. More importantly, you have provided solutions. Your groundbreaking nonprofit organization Girls Who Code is galvanizing girls and young women around the world to see themselves as leaders in the tech industry, a place where they have not always been welcome. The inspiration for Girls Who Code came to you in 2010 as you campaigned as the first Indian American woman to run for Congress.

[Audience cheering and applauding.]

While visiting classrooms along your campaign route, you kept asking yourself, why are there so few girls in computing classes? You vowed to make a change. Today, the impact of Girls Who Code is clear. 10,000 Girls Who Code clubs exist across America and more than 600,000 girls have participated in programs offered by your organization.

[Audience cheering and applauding.]

As you have said, Girls Who Code is more than an international nonprofit. We are a movement. Not wanting to rest on these laurels, you are also a leading voice in the effort to change discourse around girls' self-esteem. Your influential TED Talk, Teach Girls Bravery, Not Perfection, sparked a national conversation about the need to socialize girls to be risk takers and to find power in their imperfections. "If we can do that," you have said, "We will build a better world for each and every one of us." For your visionary activism and passionate call for women and girls to be fearless, not flawless, Smith College is proud to award you the degree of Doctor of Humane Letters Honoris Causa.

[Audience cheering and applauding.]

And now it is my great pleasure and honor to present your 2023 commencement speaker, Reshma Saujani.

[Audience cheering and applauding.]

[Reshma Saujani]: Thank you for that kind introduction. President McCartney, deans, faculty, distinguished guests, and most importantly, class of 2023! Woo!

[Audience cheering and applauding.]

Thank you for having me here today and for allowing me to not only address all of you, but the people who got you to this moment, the friends you count as family and the family you count as friends. It's a privilege to be here where so many women I admire once planted ivy alongside their classmates or shared a cup of tea on a Friday afternoon. And it's a joy to celebrate with you at the end of one journey and at

the beginning of the next. I think a lot about how I can support tomorrow's leaders especially women, non-binary folks, and gender nonconforming individuals.

[Audience cheering and applauding.]

I created an organization that's literally taught hundreds of thousands of girls to code, and now I'm leading a movement to put moms first in a country….

[Audience cheering and applauding.]

To put moms first in a country that always seems to put us last. In my career, cis men have been well, few and far between, so I got to admit I feel quite at home here at Smith.

[Audience cheering and applauding.]

But look, it hasn't always been that way. For most of my life, I felt like I didn't belong. I grew up in a small town in Illinois as a daughter of refugees where no one looked like us and nobody wanted us there either. I heard that message loud and clear. Sometimes, it was literally spray painted on the side of my house.

So as I got older, I couldn't shake that feeling that no matter how much I accomplished, no matter how much recognition I received, no matter how many lines I added to my resume, I'll never feel like I'm a part of this place. So I tried to fade into the background where at least if I didn't fit in, I wouldn't be found out. When I got into Yale Law School, I would sit in the back and just slouch and raise my hand a little like this, terrified to answer the question, even when I knew the answer. When my classmates went off to white shoe law firms, I followed suit and bought a suit, disguising myself, someone else's job. When I ran for office, I stopped wearing my favorite gold hoops and my red red lipstick, thinking that I had to be someone else to succeed. Fake it till you make it, right? Maybe that experience sounds familiar. Maybe you've walked into a room and thought, "I feel like such a fraud here." Or maybe you've heard friends and moms and other women talk on TikTok about their feelings of self-doubt. It's an experience that so many people just describe with two words, imposter syndrome.

Hearing people talk about imposter syndrome, it feels like less about if it's going to strike, but when it's going to strike. So people ask me all the time, "Rashma, how do I overcome imposter syndrome?" The class of 2023, I am done answering that question. And you all can hold me to it because you see, imposter syndrome, it's not my problem to solve. And it's not yours either. So today, if you'll humor me, I want to squeeze in one last history lesson before we leave this place.

Let's go back to the 1890s, a few short decades after Smith was founded. Doctors had identified a never before seen medical malady, one that threatened to wreck havoc on the entire female population. That condition was called bicycle face. You see, the original bicycle had one gigantic wheel in the front and one tiny little wheel in the back. Imagine a hula hoop and a dinner plate, not easy to ride, but then along comes this revolutionary concept, two wheels of the same size. Go figure, the power of equality, baby. And as a result, cycling takes off and it takes off in Europe and North America and it takes off for women. But with the rise of women riding the bicycle comes a rise of bicycle face. Here are the symptoms of this terrifying condition. These are direct quotes, by the way, flushed cheeks, hard clenched jaw, bulging eyes, an expression that is either anxious, irritable, or at best, stony. That's right. Long before there was resting bitch face, there was resting bike face.

[Audience laughing.]

Now, here's the thing. It wasn't just women who were riding bicycles. In fact, the majority of those who had taken up the hobby were men. But bicycle face, that was strictly a woman's disease. Why? Because bicycle face was invented to purely scare women off their wheels. Here's what was really going on. Back

then, the bicycle became a symbol for a growing feminist movement. All of a sudden, women could go further and faster and they didn't need to wait around for a gentleman to show up with his horseback and give him a ride. Suffragists can now meet with one another from town to town and they would take their signs and they would fix them to the front of their handlebars. Because of the bicycle, women even started wanting different clothes. Victorian hoop skirts, so last season! Women wanted breezy bloomers better for peddling. As one magazine wrote in the 1896, "To men, the bicycle was merely just a new toy. But to women, it was the steed upon which they rode into the new world."

Of course, it wasn't long before men started seeing bikes as more than just a new toy, too. To them, bicycles and the behavior they were enabling with women were jarring, dangerous, threatening to the status quo. More than a century later, we can see bicycle face for what it is, for what it was. Not a medical mistake, but a deliberate tool, a strategy wielded by powerful men to put women back in their place, to make us stop pedaling. Ridiculous name aside, I think that there's something deeper here. I think that there's a lot we can learn about imposter syndrome from bicycle face. Both of them are strategies used to hold women back and it's up to us to not take the bait.

The way our culture talks about imposter syndrome, you also could mistake it for a medical condition, but it's not. Leslie Jamison wrote about the origins of the phrase in *The New Yorker* a few months ago, and she talked about how the two researchers who had first talked about imposter syndrome didn't call it an imposter syndrome at all. In fact, they refer to it as imposter phenomenon. And it was based on high achieving white ladies. It was never meant to be pathologized.

Still, like bicycle face before it, imposter syndrome was rooted in misogyny. It's no coincidence that the concept first emerged as Title IX became law and women started going to college or that it gained traction just as Roe v Wade was decided. And now that women had control over their bodies, they were starting to enter the workforce in droves. Just like bicycle face before, imposter syndrome was a reaction to women's progress. But this time, the backlash was even more insidious, which is why today, instead of telling you how to overcome imposter syndrome, we're going to question the whole concept.

And I want to do that by breaking down some lies we're told about imposter syndrome, starting with the big one, that maybe there's something wrong with you, that imposter syndrome is grounded in actual deficiency. Imagine you're riding a bicycle up a hill and as you pedal your way to the top, you fixate on your destination and you clench your jaw. That doesn't mean that you have bicycle face. That means you're riding a bicycle. Imposter syndrome is based on the premise that we're the problem. That if we feel underqualified, it's because we are. That if we worry that we don't have what it takes, it's because we don't. But in my experience, I have found that discomfort and anxiety to just be a natural human reaction.

You know, when I showed up at that fancy corporate law firm for the very first time, I had not just one, but two Ivy League post-graduate degrees, but still, I felt like everybody was speaking a different language. And that's because they were. So many people there had unearned privileges that I didn't. Big law firms were built by and for people who didn't look like me. So it's normal to feel like you don't fit in when you don't fit in. So as much as I love Taylor Swift, it's me. Hi, I'm not the problem. It's not me!

[Audience cheering and applauding.]

And it's not my responsibility to fix the problem. That's our second lie. That's your job to fix yourself. If your face is flushed at the end of a bicycle ride, I wouldn't tell you to powder your nose, but that's pretty much what we do when it comes to imposter syndrome. That's the message that we send to you all, that it's your job to make it go away or at least cover it up. I'm sure you've heard all the tips and tricks. Get yourself a mentor, learn how to say no, power pose your way to the top. There are countless, countless

books and articles out there. And yes, I'm counting my own on that list. For years, I too have been telling women how to overcome imposter syndrome. And look, none of it is bad advice, per se. I really do believe that we should focus less on being perfect and more on being brave. But all those shoulds, there's just ultimately another burden that we put on women that is just not solving the problem.

A great example of this is the gender pay gap. You know, in the United States, the gender pay gap has not budged in two decades. Two decades. But still, we keep telling women that you all should one by one know your worth, slay your negotiation, ask for more, when instead, we should just be telling companies to pay women fairly, right?

[Audience cheering and applauding.]

Provide salary transparency, offer paid leave and childcare, both proven to close the pay gap. Companies, not individual women have the power to erase disparities overnight. Similarly though, when it comes to imposter syndrome, the unspoken assumption is that if you don't stick up for yourself and you feel like an imposter, it's your own fault. It's extraordinarily unfair and it's unhelpful if we really care about closing the gender gap. The problem, the solution, it's just bigger than any one of us.

And that brings me to my third and final lie, which is that imposter syndrome is inevitable. So if we don't fix ourselves, what do we do? We go to the source. The notion of bicycle face was debunked by Dr. Sarah Hackett Stevenson. She was the first ever woman admitted to the American Medical Association. She didn't tell women to fix their bicycle face and she certainly didn't tell them to stop pedaling. She challenged the entire premise.

When as many as 82% of women report feeling imposter syndrome, it's hard to believe that this is just about individuals. Imposter syndrome is the result of structural inequality, not individual inadequacy. Look, I've sat across from some powerful dudes, CEOs, presidents, senators, you name it. And that experience has truly been a gift. Not because they are smarter than I am, but because they're not.

[Audience cheering and applauding.]

I told you about the hundreds of thousands of girls that I've taught to code. Well, any one of them could run circles around these dudes. But it took me 30 years to learn this lesson. And this is why I'm sharing it with you today because right here, right now, I need you to know this. It's never been about whether we're qualified enough, smart enough, prepared enough. If you are here today, it is because you are. Instead, it's always been about the political, the financial, the culture barriers that are designed to keep us out of these rooms in the first place. It's leaders who look around and tell women the biggest problem facing you is not childcare or paid leave or misogyny. The biggest problem is you, which is all to say that imposter syndrome, it's a distraction, it's a strategy. It's a way to keep our concentration on our own alleged inadequacies so we don't turn it towards the sexism, the racism, the classism, the homophobia, the transphobia that is baked into the system in the first place!

[Audience cheering and applauding.]

Which means our job is to stay focused, to focus less on fixing ourselves and more on healing a broken world. Now, for many of you, I know this work is not new. Marginalized people, women of color, we've been leading the fight against systematic injustice for generations. And your generation has been fighting the status quo your whole lives. So here is the task ahead of you, class of 2023, is to know that you are more than good enough so that you can dedicate your precious limited time on the things that aren't. My great hope is that you will want to take up this work, that you will want to build a better world than the one you inherited. And I am absolutely certain that you are up to the task because your Smith education has prepared you for this moment.

This is a special place. For the past four years, you've been part of a community where no team captain, no club president, no valedictorian has ever been held back because of their gender. And I know it's bittersweet to leave that behind. But consider this, you've had a tiny glimpse of what the world could be, what it should be. Now bring that audacity, that agency, that authenticity to the world beyond North Hampton because you…

[Audience cheering and applauding.]

You are uniquely qualified to make that world a reality. Imposter syndrome is modern day bike face. My hope is that one day Smithies of the future will see them both as equally laughable, just two more failed attempts to hold us back. Getting there though will be the work of a lifetime. But I believe that there's one thing you can do today on this first day of the new chapter of your life and every day moving forward, just ride your bicycle.

[Audience cheering and applauding.]

And what I mean by that is pursue what you want to pursue as imposter syndrome is just too made up words on a page because they are. Do your work, make your argument, lead your movement because there's nothing wrong with you. It's not your job to fix yourself, but it is your job to fix the system. And from everything I've heard about this class, you're going to do a damn good job doing it.

[Audience cheering and applauding.]

Because you have what it takes to lead. And you have an entire community because if you fall, they're right here to pick you up. So start pedaling. Feel the sun on your face. Feel the wind in your hair. Feel the joy, feel the freedom, feel the love. Congratulations class of 2023 on reaching this incredible milestone. You're ready, go!

[Audience cheering and applauding.]

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Return to Figure 8.2

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Yvonne M. Smith LCSW holds a Masters in Social Work from Portland State University. She is full-time faculty in Human Services and Gerontology at Clackamas Community College in Oregon City, Oregon. She specializes in working with older adults as well as therapeutic techniques with adults of all ages. She gets great enjoyment out of teaching and traveling.

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Sally Guyer teaches at Portland Community College and comes to the field with over 30 years of experience working with children, youth, and families in a variety of settings from residential treatment to Head Start to having her own consulting and training firm. In addition to teaching at PCC, Sally is the clinical director for an adoption agency and regularly presents at conferences. Sally is a first-generation college graduate, and she holds an MSW from Portland State and a BS in Psychology from Western Oregon University. She has expertise in Attachment Theory and Development, Brain Development, Atypical Development, Clinical Supervision, Program Design, Adoption, Child Welfare, and Foster Care, just to name a few. Being outdoors (but not camping) feeds Sally's soul, and she enjoys hiking, watching the Blazers and the OSU Beavers, making jewelry, going to concerts and listening to music, and spending time with friends and family to relax.

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Ivan Mancinelli-Franconi, Ph.D, is a psychologist and university and college professor, editor, author and coauthor of academic works, as well as translator of English-to-Spanish literary works. He was born in Chile into an Italian-German family who originally came to the United States to further their educational pursuits. His varied work experience ranges from evaluating federally funded educational programs; resettling refugees from Asia, the Middle East, Eastern Europe, and Cuba; being a Department of Justice linguist; and working as a Mental Health Professional in private practice. His life's focus has centered on assisting human interactions with culturally sensitive activities and making education enriching, affordable, enjoyable, and yet also able to meet rigorous academic standards. He lives in Vancouver, Washington, where he spends his time writing, playing the harp and other Asian string instruments, and restoring large pieces of African art to ensure their cultural legacy continues to enrich people's lives.

Elizabeth B. Pearce

Elizabeth aka Liz (she/her) is a faculty member who teaches Human Development and Family Studies classes at Linn-Benton Community College (LBCC). She has served as the college's Department Chair, Faculty Fellow in Technology and Teaching, and as the Difference, Power, and Oppression Faculty Lead. Previously she directed the Family Resource Center, a full-time child care and parent cooperative for LBCC student and staff families.

Her passion is creating opportunities and resources for transformative learning through open pedagogy in the community college classroom. She has presented locally, regionally, and nationally on this

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Liz earned a Bachelor of Arts in Child Study at Tufts University and a Master of Education in Administration, Planning, and Social Policy at the Harvard Graduate School of Education. She has completed post-graduate coursework in child/family development, life course theory, educational policy, and sociology at Wheelock College (now Boston University) and Oregon State University. She is the author of *Contemporary Families: An Equity Lens* and *Introduction to Human Services* and is a contributor to *Human Services Practicum: An Equity Lens*, all published by Open Oregon Educational Resources.

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It is an ongoing struggle in the field of human services to acknowledge and address inequities. These inequities exist in who is receiving services as well as who is providing services. We have tried to address both of these issues throughout the text. We ask students to reflect on the culture of the agency, how clients experience the helping process, and their own experiences as new professionals. In this way, we hope to increase students' awareness of inequities and prepare them to address these issues in the field.

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This book went through an extensive pre-production process before it was launched in order to be accountable to the project's equity lens; revise drafts for quality; and incorporate feedback from scholars, practitioners, and students in the discipline.

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