

Preface

This book is written for students who are entering their first practicum experience. Some of you reading this book are advanced undergraduate students; others are beginning graduate studies. When we collaborated on our first book for this course with a different publisher, we did it because we were tired of piecing together selected readings from various sources for our students. We wanted to have a single source for them. That first book taught us the variability of this first practicum experience. We found the book a reasonably good match with the needs of our courses, but some colleagues who teach similar courses did not. We then began to discuss more specifically what students were doing on the first practicum experience. This discussion resulted in the first edition of the current book about 9 years after our initial attempt. Although we were much happier with this new book than our previous one, we realize that it is now time to update some of the chapters, remove some topics, and add others.

Although we developed this book as a textbook, we do not view it in the traditional sense of that term. For us, each chapter is equivalent to a guest lecture that might occur in the seminar-style class that typically accompanies the assigned field placement. Depending on the location of the university, guest lecturers may not be readily available on certain topics of interest to students enrolled in such a course. By having those lectures in textbook form, students can revisit topics as they occur during the placement time. Because these lectures are essentially independent, there are several ways in which this book differs from a more traditional textbook. First, the voice is more variable than a classroom textbook. The authors are speaking

from their individual perspectives on their area of expertise. Second, there is some minor repetition of information because of the nature of the subjects. It is important for students to hear certain topics in the different contexts. For example, many of the mental health professions described in the final chapter of the book are also mentioned in Chapters 1 and 3. Third, each chapter contains material that may not be specifically relevant to an individual reader or even a particular course format. As we evaluated practicum courses in various universities, we learned that students have quite different levels of interaction with clients and professionals during their first practicum. Some initial practicum experiences involve little or no direct client contact. They are mainly observational. In other settings, however, the practicum student may be expected to be a participant in group therapy sessions, be trained as a technician to administer simple paper-and-pencil tests, participate in team staff meetings, and have access to inpatient charts with notes by various health care professionals. Students in the latter type of placement may benefit from having information about medications mentioned in charts and staff meetings, samples of how to handle ethical dilemmas when interacting with clients at the placement, and a resource of what tests are used for specific purposes and populations.

Because of the variable nature of this course, students may find that they benefit from reading chapters in a different order from their placement in the book. As stand-alone presentations, this allows instructors as well as students to individualize their use.

As we noted in the preface to the first edition of this book, although graduate students preparing for a profession in psychology are certainly expected to adhere to the *Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct* of the American Psychological Association (2010), there is some variability of opinion among psychologists regarding whether undergraduate students who are mainly observers are held to a professional code of ethics. It is our view that students of psychology in applied settings should be held to the same code of ethics as professionals in applied settings. It is important for them to learn this material early in their career, just as they learn about research ethics in methods courses before actually conducting research. Those students who have a more active role in their first practicum often sign confidentiality agreements at their sites. Having a complete context for this expectation is part of the learning process for the practicum experience. Even students who are in an observer role may find themselves talking individually with patients. For example, students placed on an inpatient psychiatric unit may find themselves talking individually with patients in much the same role as psychological technicians. Reading about ethical issues that may arise as well as

how to establish rapport provides them with a foundation to maximize this part of the learning experience.

The first four chapters and the final chapter in the book are intended to provide basic orientation information on the context of applied practicum settings. Some of the chapters in this book are designed to provide summary material from specific content areas. Depending on the student's background, these chapters may be read as a quick review or a summary learning experience. Chapters 5, 6, and 7 are noteworthy here. If it has been several years since you completed an abnormal psychology course, Chapter 5 provides a quick review. For other students, some of the material may be different from what was learned because of the variable nature of textbooks and instructional style. Undergraduate courses in tests and measurements are common but seldom required. Thus, for some students, Chapter 6 may provide the initial exposure to material that may be integral to the practicum site. Even those students who have had a beginning course in tests and measurements may find that their placement site uses specialized tests not typically emphasized in their course. Thus, this chapter may provide a general understanding of the tests being used. Chapter 8 covers material that may be part of an undergraduate clinical psychology course. Like tests and measurements, clinical psychology courses are not likely to be required. These courses may even be taken after the practicum experience because of the interest developed as a result of the practicum.

The chapters on special issues in working with children and with older persons are provided for students who may be working in agencies dealing with these age groups. The chapter on aging is new to the second edition. The chapter on working with children is reprinted from the first edition of this book. We were unable to locate the author for a revision of the material. Thus, some of the references are older than those in the other chapters. We believe, however, that the basic content remains solid, and we encourage students who are working with children to pursue further information on this topic. As you read these chapters, keep in mind that they are intended to be sources of basic information that you will need for your practicum experience. Often, you will find it useful to do further reading in areas of particular relevance to what you are doing. In such cases, a literature search via PsycINFO on your university library website, as well as a Google Scholar search, will uncover much information. Along this line, a useful glossary of medical terms and abbreviations may be found at http://www.jdmd.com/pdf/jdmd_glossary.pdf. You may find this useful in trying to read the charts and files on clients with whom you are interacting.

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Reference

American Psychological Association. (2010). *Ethical principles of psychologists and code of conduct* (2002, Amended June, 2010). Retrieved from <http://www.apa.org/ethics/code/index.aspx>