

Dr. Mimi Choy-Brown ([00:07](#)):

My name is Mimi Choy-Brown, and this is the Heart of Supervision Podcast. This podcast is about what supervision is, what it could be and why it matters for child welfare, from both a research and a practice informed perspective. I'm an assistant professor at the University of Minnesota School of Social Work. And this podcast is in collaboration with the Center for Advanced Studies in child welfare.

Supervisee quote ([00:32](#)):

My hope is that supervision becomes as normalized as getting up and going to work. I use every second to find one on one time with my old boss, every single second. And I've been in the work now 22 years.

Dr. Mimi Choy-Brown ([00:48](#)):

Welcome to the first episode of the Heart of Supervision Podcast. In this episode, I had the opportunity to talk with a leading expert in clinical supervision who teaches future and current supervisors at the University of Minnesota School of Social Work and is a leader shaping social work practice for youth today. Christina Haddad Gonzalez. I'm so thrilled to have Christina on the podcast to share her abundant wisdom. We talked about staying curious and remembering what supervision is really about, and what's so hard about it. And when the magic happens. We also talk about the promise of what supervision could be in child welfare and what our systems really need in order to support it. I learned so much from Christina during this conversation, and I hope you do too. Enjoy. I'm so excited to have you here today. And if you could take a second just to introduce yourself, we're really excited to have the conversation today.

Christina Haddad Gonzalez ([01:46](#)):

Hello, my name is Christina Haddad Gonzalez. Um, my pronouns are she/her/hers? I was born female and I identify as female and I've been supporting growth and development of social workers and school counselors and, just practitioners in community for as long as I've been a mom. So 15 years and three months.

Dr. Mimi Choy-Brown ([02:12](#)):

Awesome. So can you tell us a little bit about how you came to be a clinical supervision expert as you've been named by multiple sources?

Christina Haddad Gonzalez ([02:25](#)):

Um, so I'm definitely not an expert. I would say absolutely. I've learned from experts. So I think my journey to learn about how to teach and support folks, especially with a really deep commitment to folks of color and folks from historically marginalized and oppressed communities, communities starts with having been supervised amazingly and also not so great. So, um, yeah, I talk a lot in supervision and when I teach that we bring into our supervisory relationships, our experiences with power and power differentials. So, um, my family, my grandparents came over from Lebanon and so my parents are first-generation Lebanese immigrants. And my father didn't finish high school and my mom kind of barely did. And, deference, elder respect the priest, the doctor and elders was just deeply ingrained in me as a young Arab woman. So being able to be in a supervision experience, the first most amazing experience for me was with a remarkable black female leader who just saw things I couldn't see in my own self. Who, you know, said stop talking about sitting at the big kid's table, cause you've been here for over a year and lead with what you know.

Christina Haddad Gonzalez ([03:54](#)):

So I think that's what really started it. Um, my dear friend here in the district, our assistant superintendent in the district had us share how we became leaders. And my first thing was because she believed in me the second was because the divine said I was supposed to. So, you know, I think that I've become better at it because I learned, well, I'm open to feedback. I'm not white. So I have a crap ton of ego strength. Like I've had experiences of being judged and marginalized. And yeah, so, and just learning, learning from really remarkable professors and leaders in the work.

Dr. Mimi Choy-Brown ([04:33](#)):

Can you tell us a little bit, you gave some really good examples about, you know, just being open and being reflect. Are there, you know, things that you did or do to continue to learn, to be a supervisor that you would recommend to folks?

Christina Haddad Gonzalez ([04:48](#)):

Yeah. Well, I want to start with being a supervisee and that's to get out of the way. Like, I, I just, I remember moving into a very white system that provided community mental health. And so for the first time I was going to do office therapy. So all of my work previously was home-based family and child therapy, or in center in a therapeutic preschool, with mostly folks of color serving and mostly folks of color leading and engaging in the work. And so I moved into this setting where one, I was going to do office therapy for the very first time, have an office and they were going to come to me. And second, I was going to work for the first time with an EHR, an electronic health record. And I was in a supervisory kind of program manager role overseeing a mental health program.

Christina Haddad Gonzalez ([05:36](#)):

And so of course I was like, well, how am I going to do this da as a supervisor in the position, we also carried a few clients so we could know how to do the EHR and even just keep a pulse on the clinical work. And at that point I hadn't done clinical work in about six or seven years too, because I was in a leadership role where, from where I moved to previously. And so I remember bringing my DAN to the clinical director and asking, and she said to me, I you're just so open to feedback. And so I think being an astute open-minded open-hearted supervisee is important that sometimes we just worked so hard to craft. How can I say this in a way so that Mimi will understand, I think Mimi, you as my role play here, right. Also has an opportunity to say, how can I keep my heart and my mind open and be curious and what I'll say to you and everyone that has ever worked with me, I think we'll agree.

Christina Haddad Gonzalez ([06:32](#)):

Is that what I, and I might get a little teary. What I have at the center of everything I do and say is results for young people, for families and communities, always, always this isn't about you. And if this is becoming personalized or you're feeling defensive or a sense of fragility or even attacked, I need you to know I'm pouring this into you because there are hundreds of young people or 50 families, or a deep set of brown and black bodied, remarkable beings that are going to be impacted that if I fail to name what I see operating, that's getting in the way of results, positivity, change, progress. If I don't speak this into what I hear you saying, we'll be doing a further disservice and we've done enough disservice. So that's what keeps me laser focused.

Dr. Mimi Choy-Brown ([07:27](#)):

And kind of highlighted. I think that we see that in the research too, that the kind of mission focus and kind of keeping that, keeping, just keeping a laser focus on why we're doing this work is so, so, so critical. And in your, I guess I'm curious as you, when you kind of, I'm imagining in our role play where I'm the person who's like having trouble taking the feedback and you maybe reinforce this kind of mission, you know, in your experience, I'm just curious, like, is that, how do people receive that and what else do they need in that moment to kind of like, right; it's not about me and how do you help people to kind of accept that feedback when they're feeling maybe their back is up and they're just...

Christina Haddad Gonzalez ([08:17](#)):

Oh yeah. I mean, I think a lot of it depends on where you're at, what phase of supervision, right? If you're in this connected trusting space and you've both fostered relationship and trust and feedback and growth have been normalized, then that's a, non-issue the hardest part is when there maybe isn't trust and, or the person's ego strength or sense of self is either temporarily weaker or, you know, I so often you'll see folks, I work in education now, right? So I work in a school district where supervision isn't normalized. So when I, you know, I can use this as a great example. When I started here, I oversee social workers, school counselors, all the support staff folks. And I pretty consistently heard from a fair number of social workers. We've never had a you and no one's asked the questions you've asked, so pretty much get out of my stuff.

Christina Haddad Gonzalez ([09:18](#)):

Right. And I always, I think it's funny. I heard my dear comrade and mentor said recently, if you don't want me in your business, if you don't want me in your business, don't give me a reason to be in it. And, I had a lot of reason to be in people's business when I started and more because of opportunity to be aligned. And that social work school, social work looked really different from school to school, to school. And so with that, I'll be honest. It took me six months to hook in two or three and up to five years to hook in the last two or three. So what I knew and what I did with mostly white bodied female identified folks, which was also very new for me and hard, very, very hard. So I want to pause around what I did with those folks.

Christina Haddad Gonzalez ([10:09](#)):

What I did for myself was re-engage in therapy, get and uphold or continue to get support from other folks of color outside of the district and find white allies and white champions inside the district. But with that specific team, I was really focused on consistency and predictability, staying mission driven and being curious, right? So I am a reflective supervisor. So tell me more about how that came to be and why that decision was made, and then to say, and I'm wondering about lots of one-on-one. I shadowed folks, you know, but I think what operates a lot for folks that, and most folks, and then, you know, the best boss I ever had, you know, I used to come to her after she was my boss, and I'd be frustrated about things happening. And she'd said to me, you have yet to accept, she's going to be like, I didn't even remember telling you this, but you have yet to accept that most folks don't get good supervision.

Christina Haddad Gonzalez ([11:08](#)):

And until you, you know, you need to accept that so that when you come in and offer that support in that direction, just know it's new, right. So that's been something I'm always mindful of to just deeper. And I'm not perfect. Trust me. I've when I teach in this supervision series, I talk about my mistakes. I go too fast. I can be too hard. I'm about the business a lot. So I'll forget, you know, I have to go back and reread my emails. Like I was wondering about, you know, hello, how are you? I hope vacation was great.

Welcome back from the summer. I've been thinking about you, you know, and then I'm also curious about, so I mean, I make lots..

Dr. Mimi Choy-Brown ([11:47](#)):

I can really identify with that.

Christina Haddad Gonzalez ([11:49](#)):

Yeah. I'm from the east coast, I'm Arab, you know, like I just like,

Dr. Mimi Choy-Brown ([11:53](#)):

Straight to the point.

Christina Haddad Gonzalez ([11:53](#)):

I don't really, yeah. I don't do small talk. I'm not, I'm not a small talker. I, don't not really interested. And I also don't have a need to be filled in my own ego about work. I just need to do well. And I'm also, I don't need to be right. Although if folks are wrong and they're putting words in my mouth, that's a trigger. So just being really mindful of all of those components.

Dr. Mimi Choy-Brown ([12:14](#)):

Yeah. Yeah. So you mentioned kind of in your class, your supervision class. So I'm wondering if we can talk a little bit, if you could tell us about the Continuing Ed program focused on supervision and the supervision class that you teach at the University of Minnesota School of Social Work.

Christina Haddad Gonzalez ([12:34](#)):

Yeah, I'd love to. So I teach in the Supervision Series at the University of Minnesota and their Continuing Ed Program. I teach currently three courses. The first is Core Competencies and that's a two-day course, six hours each day. I teach Beyond 101: Navigating Use of Self in the Work, and then I teach Contracted Clinical Supervision in this series. So they're all full or half day courses that are offered a couple of times a year. You can get onto the website and find information about that. And then I also teach Supervision, Consultation and Leadership at the University of Minnesota. The foremother of those programs for the Supervision Series is Victoria Van Slyke and the foremother for the Supervision, Leadership and Consultation class is Jill Stiber. So I was able to get to the content developed by those professors and then modify and make it my own. In the Supervision Series, there's a lot of role play. And I tell folks that from go, why not role-play? I know, raise your hand if you hate it, you know, 80%.

Dr. Mimi Choy-Brown ([13:42](#)):

Everybody.

Christina Haddad Gonzalez ([13:44](#)):

And why not role play and make mistakes with a bunch of folks you don't know, or one or two that you do before you practice having hard conversations that are trauma and race informed outside of here. I really am very concrete in the core competencies. Again, similar themes that I've already shared, consistency, predictability documentation, checking for understanding, right tuning in getting out of the way as the supervisor. It's okay if you don't like that supervisee, but you better find the love real quick. If you think you're going to be able to grow and engage in a relationship and a working partnership that

really addresses folks growth edges. The importance of contracting, like we contract with our clients, right? And we engage in an informed consent process yet we don't do that with our supervisees. So really normalizing. It can be hard.

Christina Haddad Gonzalez ([14:40](#)):

I'm going to look at your files. I'm going to ask you possibly to do a process recording. I'm going to talk to clients I might hop into sessions. Um, that supervision is both about liability and due process as it is about personal and professional growth. We talk a lot about normalizing mistakes while also patterns. An incident is an incident once becomes a pattern after it's happened twice. The gift of probationary periods, you know, so just the real, that's the Core Competencies, just real foundational. The Beyond 101 is really about intersections of power and identities and how it informs our work, right? Like white folks inevitably are anxious to supervise folks of color. And folks of color are often challenged in their own, or challenged by white peers and other white leaders around competence, but also have some challenges across similarities and shared experiences with supervisees, right?

Christina Haddad Gonzalez ([15:41](#)):

So I'll continuously hear folks of color sharing in their client work or supervisory work, you know, you sold out or why aren't, why don't, you should understand why this is hard for me. So lots of conversation about how all of those, the power and gender and race and lived experience intersect and impact how we show up to our leadership. And how, you know, unequivocally it's informed by race and then many other differences. And we bring to supervision our unfinished stuff. So I always am like, what's our first experience of a power differential. I'll give you a hint. You are pulled out of a birth canal and you're smacked on the butt. And someone says, it's "a"; already deciding for you an identity, bam. Then you're placed in the arms of someone and maybe the arms of someone else, and then maybe the arms of someone else.

Christina Haddad Gonzalez ([16:35](#)):

And those are your first experiences of will this caregiver, will this person show up when I cry, when I'm hungry, when I'm hurt, right? Yeah, it's kind of psychodynamic, but it is all, you know, I am mommy sometimes, which is very uncomfortable and I'm Anty, but I'm also like annoying little sister and you don't know Jack, trust me because up until about five years ago, I looked 25. What do you know now? I look, I look like I'm in my forties now, you know, for a long while. It's like, what do you know, do you even have kids have even been in this work long? Have you ever even worked in schools? Have you ever done therapy in an office, right? You don't know Jack, so I'm just going to dismiss.

Dr. Mimi Choy-Brown ([17:23](#)):

Right. I love that you're bringing up all the different resistance kind of the way it rears its head as folks are in supervision. And they're kind of, kind of goes back to what you're saying about not wanting to be open to feedback or being open to hearing those alternative perspectives or wisdom from other places that they weren't expecting, perhaps. So you sort of answered this question already. Kind of thinking about the common challenges that students are bringing to those discussions, you know, is there one or two things that almost, you know, as students come in there, this is usually the key thing that they're worried about.

Christina Haddad Gonzalez ([18:02](#)):

Yeah. Do you want to guess before I tell you, so they're new to the fields. They're not new to the work, but often emerging supervisors or new supervisors, the thing they feel is hardest to do on supervision. And we do live in Minnesota.

Dr. Mimi Choy-Brown (18:18):

I mean, the conflict, the like just the feedback, the constructive feedback is what I would guess.

Christina Haddad Gonzalez (18:23):

100%. And it's, I think a hundred percent, if you're white and female identified. Like consistent, and we have them, I have them do it. It's pretty cool. We do a baseline supervisory response survey and a post, so pre and post. So I introductions identities work. And then I say, all right, open up your folders. There is a baseline supervisory response survey, and it's literally supervisee says this, what are you going to say out of your mouth in one to three sentences? And then they put pre on it and they put it away. And then the end of the second day, they pull up that exact same one put post on it, well, a blank new one, and then they respond. And then the checkout for the end of the second day is just that, what do you know, pre and post supervisory noticing or growth, but the, what do you hope to gain day one comfort with conflict and confidence?

Christina Haddad Gonzalez (19:18):

Yeah, absolutely. I mean, I think the most exhausting piece of the work of supervision, and you're not asking me that, but I'm going to just speak it, especially to my, and I have a lot of passing privilege. You can see me, but so folks know I'm dark haired, thick, dark eyebrows, brown eyes, and light-skinned for an Arab woman. I haven't benefited from white privilege. I benefit deeply from passing privilege. And the hardest part for me is I was raised in conflict. I know how to name it, deal with it. I'm any person that's, non-white regularly experiences, discomfort. The hardest part in supervision for me is when there's such a deep resistance to leaning in to the conflict, to the discomfort. And that's what comes up the most for emerging supervisors. And you know, the work I do here in this district with folks that have been leading for 10 and 40 years as well, like, oh, I'm worried about X person, cause they're not happy or they're feeling fragile or they're having a hard time at home.

Christina Haddad Gonzalez (20:26):

And I say, yes, and yes, and they still have to do great work. They do. They still have to do great work. And so we're going to still lean into a conversation. That's both supportive, has high expectations and high supports. So that's the number one. I don't know how to do conflict. I don't know. It's all the same thing. You'll hear it in here. I'm not comfortable with conflict. I'm not comfortable with having performance conversations. I'm really great at the counseling, consultative clinical skill development. I'm not good at administrative finish your case notes. Do your job show up on time. Yep. I'm finding my voice. Buddy to boss is a big deal too. Like most of us usually work in a system where we're a buddy and then we get a promotion and that was my first promotion buddy to boss. And so how you go from like happy hour-ing to, and baby showers and weddings to be like, oh crap. They don't even invite me for lunch anymore. And how you make the covert overt map. And that I talk about that all the time. Let's make the covert overt. What's beneath it. Okay. I'm your boss now. So yeah, I'm not gonna have happy hour with you, but I'd love to take you out to a cup of coffee during the workday to talk about how I can support you and how we navigate friend hat from supervisor hat.

Dr. Mimi Choy-Brown (21:43):

And so, I mean, I think you're sort of saying this too, and, but just to make it explicit, how do you think supervision plays a role in child welfare practice and sort of the quality of child welfare practice. You talked a little bit about the mission focus, but I just want to make it really explicit in terms of like, why is this an important mechanism for us? Like, especially when we know that a lot of supervision isn't great or isn't awesome, you know, why is it that we still kind of double down on this in terms of, in our systems?

Christina Haddad Gonzalez ([22:26](#)):

I mean, I'm about zero to 10 in the deepest parts of my heart and you can zero to 15, you know, you can make guesses kind of personally about what times or what developmental moments were hard for me then, you know, coincidentally, I'm going to digress momentarily, but I have a reason. I was a dancer, went to dance class six days a week, got to travel. And if I didn't have my dance teachers, these adults that like, and I, 25 years later, I just saw my dance teacher and her husband happenstance at a hospital. And I thanked her and I said to her, I would probably have a 25 year old and an addiction if it weren't for you. And she said to me was so interesting. She said, I didn't realize that home life was hard for you until my daughter, who was one of my best friends, my daughter and I went to your high school graduation party.

Christina Haddad Gonzalez ([23:27](#)):

And she said to me, something's not right. And I said, yeah, cause I got my butt whooped that morning. And so I share that because when I think about child welfare workers, when we, as child welfare workers have stuff that we bring into the work and it gets in the way of doing right, not being right, but doing what's right. And then we walk into a supervisory relationship and our supervisors aren't attuned to what we need. We could do more harm. And the contrast to that is if we have an attuned, loving, and caring supervisor that can hold their BART, their boundary of authority, role and task, and we might veer into therapy. I talk a lot about that in the training too. We fall back on our skills as social workers. So I know that I did wonderful therapy in the first few years I was a supervisor and I don't do any.

Christina Haddad Gonzalez ([24:25](#)):

Now I might name, I just had a wonderful supervision meeting with a supervisee of mine, and she has this very high need for competence. And she's like, you're really good at grounding me and then directing me outside. Right? So I think it's so critical because you're dealing with the most important people in the world, which are our young people. And if we don't hone and develop always me too, I'm not an expert. I appreciate the title. And trust me, I use every second of my own supervision. I seek consultation outside of my supervision. I regularly run by my ideas, our superintendent, our assistant superintendent, even though I don't directly report to either of them always start with my own supervisor. I reach out to the best boss, one of my best friends and mentors I process. So I'm getting my stuff out of the way I'm getting validated and I can do better for my staff. So that's why it's critical supervisors in child welfare, do your work, that's it. Do your work, get to therapy, get consultation. So you can show up as your best leader self for our practitioners in child welfare.

Dr. Mimi Choy-Brown ([25:37](#)):

And if you're thinking about sort of the system that they're working in and the systems that you're, cause you mentioned superintendent, you know, you're thinking systems level kind of influence. If we're thinking about these systems that social workers are working in, and particularly for this podcast, in



thinking about child welfare, what do our systems need to do to support supervisors? I mean, I hear you talking about a couple of things, but are there other things that our systems need to be doing?

Christina Haddad Gonzalez ([26:08](#)):

Yeah, so I do clinical supervision, contractually, and I work with a lot of county, young county social workers doing strictly child welfare work. First and foremost, there needs to be a normalizing and a modeling of asking for help. Just build in not just how many intakes did you do? How many cases did you close? How many visits did you do? It's not, that's all the technical work. Child welfare leaders, practitioners, workers need to prioritize a consistent and regular time that is both individual with the direct supervisor and in a group setting where there is a deep opportunity to consult, to learn, to grow, to lead with strength about what's happening for the client or the consumer, to ideate conceptually about what's happening. So obviously leading with their multiple identities, racial, protective factors, and then moving into this is why I'm stuck. I need help. And that it becomes formal.

Christina Haddad Gonzalez ([27:12](#)):

I know that certain systems are working towards a more consultative knowledge sharing base. It just has not been normalized. I want to go back to what Diane said to me 15 years ago. Most folks haven't had good supervision. So if you're a supervisor or an emerging supervisor; get better, go to classes, use each other, prioritize it, be gentle with yourself too. You know, I'll teach this class and folks have been supervising for 20 years and they're like, oh, I don't even have a regularly scheduled supervision time with my staff. I have 30 staff. I'm going to meet with every staff weekly. And I'm like, cause we do action commitments. I'm like, Hmm, Jenny. So if you're going to do 30 hours of one hour starting next week, um, how long do you think you're going to be able to sustain that Jenny? So like start small monthly check-ins. 15 minute phone calls, clear supervision agendas, document what's happening.

Christina Haddad Gonzalez ([28:11](#)):

And now I want to just speak quickly into the hearts of supervisees. Here we go. Ask for what you need. They have to be able to be like, listen, cause they're, I'd say about a quarter of the student staff adults. They're not students, a quarter of the learners in my CEU's are emerging supervisors. So I'll be like, say you went to this training, don't say my last name. And you know, this instructor named Christina talked about the importance of regular supervision. Could we get a regular supervision time scheduled and I'll create an agenda. And that, that agenda is balanced with technical and adaptives with goals and grows with what's working and not working. So prioritize it be as present as possible. Oooh I like, I love to talk about how not present I was at one point in my leadership and all I did was decide to close my computer and got a cute little sign up that said, do not disturb and put it on my door.

Christina Haddad Gonzalez ([29:11](#)):

And it transformed my supervision because I was like, oh crap, I'm super distractible. And where I worked at the time, there was glass on the doors. And so people would come and stand in the door. Cause they thought, that, you know, that was the norm in that system. I'm going to interrupt because I got a need. And we weren't allowed to cover the glass. So I got a little cute little pillow things that please do not disturb. And then I closed my computer and I did actually shorten the supervision because I had a lot of work to do, I had a huge job. So I shortened it. I think we did like 30 minutes, but a computer was closed, do not disturb. And then I could be truly present. That's the other piece. If you're going to give them five minutes, be present, if you're gonna give them 50 be present, but do something better, more consistently predictably and with structure.



Dr. Mimi Choy-Brown ([29:55](#)):

Awesome. Awesome. So one other question I have for you is supervision. That something that I've really kind of played with and thought about this idea, is supervision surveillance or support and sort of where does it fall? I think in some of my work, my research, you know, it sort of depends on some of the things that you're talking about and how it's perceived. And so I'm just really curious to hear your thoughts on that question.

Christina Haddad Gonzalez ([30:30](#)):

I mean, the reality is, it's almost always both, and it really depends again on the trajectory where folks are at. And unfortunately, if there is a pattern, not necessarily an incident, but a pattern of performance issues, you do have to do a level of surveillance. What I'll say about that is I worked somewhere once where it was really cool. They kind of get this feedback first. We had to move into a really hard performance conversation with someone. And I, you know we what I learned to do from great leaders is to, you know, when you do the write up, you have really clear goals and all of this and the reason and all. But then I co-create, like I say, these are the goals we're going to work together on how we're going to achieve those goals. And so it's a series of meetings, right?

Christina Haddad Gonzalez ([31:18](#)):

And at the very end of course, you know, inability to comply with these expectations may result in further disciplinary action, including and leading up to termination. Okay, blah, blah, blah. We're going to threaten your threat. Right? You got to, because it might not be a great fit. Okay. So go through that, then develop together a strategy, a timeline, clear targets, and this is the part surveillance versus support. Then I get to say, okay, so we developed this writeup. And so one of the goals is that you're going to arrive on time and that if you're running late, you're going to send me an email. And then if you miss a client appointment, you're going to reschedule within that same week and that there will be no new concerns. So these are our agreements. We agree, Mimi. Okay. So what I'm going to tell you now is if there are no new concerns, Mimi, you have my full confidence that you'll continue to be successful in your work.

Christina Haddad Gonzalez ([32:12](#)):

So now, while I have, in my role, the positional power to say to you, you need to do this and this and this, I do get to shoot it on you. I'm shooting on you right now. I'm going to actually transfer this power back to you, Mimi. So here you go. And I hand it to them and say, now it's your decision. You know exactly what you need to be to do, to continue to be successful in this role. And I'm going to repeat, if there are no new concerns, you will be. Now you get to decide. So while I'm exercising my power to surveil and I'm going to use data and I'm going to track, and we're going to meet on a weekly basis, I'm going to look at your goals and I'm going to look at your calendar. Absolutely. I'm going to also acknowledge the concept in supervision of the countervailing presence of power that will have the power to be like, Mimi, get on your game. You are the one, ultimately who has the final say, and if you're going to do what I said or not. You! So I just overtly transfer it back to the supervisee, what you're going to do about it. Right?

Dr. Mimi Choy-Brown ([33:11](#)):

Right. And then you're offering sort of that support to help them get through that, I guess, contract that they've established with you.

Christina Haddad Gonzalez (33:19):

Yup. And in one of the, one of these conversations, I remember saying, it's not about you and it's not about me. It's about the work. And had this hard conversation with this person. And it was things like how this person showed up in meetings. They had a tendency to eye roll and over-talk, I think there were some attire conversations. Just appropriate work attire. I mean, pretty like it. Like if you want to be successful, you can do this. So was the only performance conversation we ever had. And in my, when I left that organization, this person wrote me a card. It said in there, I love you. You know, I'm thankful for you and it's not about me or you. I was like, yes. You know, cause I said, it's about the work and we're giving you this feedback so we can do what's right for our babies on the north side.

Christina Haddad Gonzalez (34:08):

That's it. I want you here. I've seen you with kids. I've seen you with parents. I want you to do this work. Can I give you two pieces of feedback so you can do it even better? Please. Don't roll your eyes in meetings, please don't sit back and cross your arms and make a noise. Please stay engaged, please be positive. And when it's hard, let's do that one-on-one in private. And also please don't have things coming out of parts of your body that are inappropriate. Like just, you know, wear you know, like your attire needs to just, here's what I've noticed. Great. I mean, honestly, no ongoing concerns.

Dr. Mimi Choy-Brown (34:44):

Yeah. Fantastic. I have two more questions for you. And one that has come to the fore just in the recent, but I know in recent context, but I know people and it sounds like you have been working on this for a long time. But I think more and more system-wide conversations are talking about how can we engage in anti-racist practice in the context of our work. And these are conversations that are long overdue. And one of the things that I'm really curious about is if and how supervision can engage with anti-racist frameworks and does, and when I think about this question and ask folks, I also say, and if not yet, but I think for you, it's already, it's already there. So I'm going to stop there. But, I think it's absent in our models of supervision. It's absent in the conversation about how we can leverage this 30 minutes of presence or this 30 minutes of, you know, whatever the space is that people have. I'm just really curious about your perspectives on how, and if we should be thinking about that space for anti-racist practice.

Christina Haddad Gonzalez (36:03):

So I was raised at Reuben Lindh Family Services. It's no longer an organization, it merged, but 1999, North and South Side Organization doing in-home parent education support, working with mamas who were sober with open CPS cases, a parenting program for mamas with disabilities who were parenting and had open CPS cases, a Southeast Asian preschool program, the most amazing work, the most amazing staff, the best time of my professional career, 10 years, 1999, 11 to 2010. And so if anyone knows Reuben Lindh Family Services and shout out to all the people I got to learn from and who were my experts. And I just, it was just an ingrained. I mean, it literally was just how we talked about ourselves and our clients. Most of the staff were folks of color. Most of the leadership or a fair amount of leadership were folks of color, not most, but a fair and many, many folks of color in leadership in 99 and 2005 and six, regardless, white bodied folks or brown or black bodied or Asian folk, whoever they were BIPOC staff and White staff were fluent in talking about identity.

Christina Haddad Gonzalez (37:19):

And we did home-based work before cell phones. So in our case, formulations, you know, Johnny is a 14 year old black male who is likable, loves clean shoes and works really hard at school. So it's just always

been embedded. And then I've always embedded it in interview questions from back then. How does your identity impact how you show up, talk about your work across difference. Like it's a screener for hiring and always has been checking for fluency in the languages that they report they speak. Oooh we, one time we hired someone who said they spoke Spanish, but it was Portuguese. I was like, I better be in all the interviews from now on because I speak Portuguese too. You know I was like, oh, can I be in all Spanish speaking interviews? And 10 of test.. One of my clients was like, "no le entiendo la senora nueva", I don't understand the new lady. I was like, ella es espanol, she's like, eso es no espanol, she's like, that is not Spanish. I was like, so I walked up to.

Dr. Mimi Choy-Brown ([38:16](#)):

Portuguese is different words.

Christina Haddad Gonzalez ([38:21](#)):

I was like, Hables espanol?. And she was like, [inaudible]. I was like, oh my God, she just answered me in Portuguese. So anyways, you know, being really thoughtful about how we onboard and how we hire, and then the embedding part. I want to talk more presently because I will say that there's an exhaustion. I can't stop acknowledging my passing privilege. And I also can't stop acknowledging that I've been doing this work since 1999. Anti-racist work, trauma-informed as race informed period. Right? So Mr. George Floyd was murdered and all of a sudden I have white staff, they're like, what can I do different? Even some went so far as to ask me and call me while there is smoke around my house and helicopters, because we don't live that far from where he was murdered we're in between the precinct and where he was murdered.

Christina Haddad Gonzalez ([39:11](#)):

But my chosen family is blocks from him regard where he was murdered. So what's unique to this time of racial reckoning that is different is that white folks are differently interested in doing the work. And so right after George Floyd was murdered, I told all of my teams and my leadership that I would give this system one more year of work. And that if we didn't really engage in the anti-racist work, then I would leave. And it was not a threat. It was tearful, it was tearful. And so, and actually right now, as I'm on this podcast to my comrade who left our organization said, are you going to stay in public education? Because he remembers me, he's a black bodied leader, male. He remembers my commitment last year. And what I'm going to say, Mimi is I'm staying. And I say that because systemically in this district, we have passed an equity policy.

Christina Haddad Gonzalez ([40:04](#)):

I have, we have written anti-racist action commitments for every one of my staff. We check in about these anti-racist action commitments on a monthly basis in our staff meetings and overt smart goals, specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, time specific. We socialize that commitment. We have a conversation about how we're doing, if we're doing it well. We have embedded questions across the interview process. We're going to develop a more deeper commitment to our practitioners of color, our BIPOC folks. We sent out communication to our educators, to white educators, blank, to BIPOC educators, this like, and I get to participate in that messaging and that support. So what I'll say to you is you don't just embed it in that 30 minutes, you embed it in all of your work. You examined the systems, the processes, the practices, the policies, the interventions, the supervision, everything, and you help folks across identities, across spots on the racial equity journey from just starting.

Christina Haddad Gonzalez ([41:02](#)):

My eyes just woke up to I'm a black bodied female leader in education, and I'm tired. You embed it all. And you wrap yourselves up in both support and accountability. And you use the data to drive why we have to do better. But what I say, what I said recently in a consultation I delivered, I said for non-white folks, we always have to exercise grace because if we didn't, we would hurt ourselves or someone else. That's the reality. So I want to speak into the hearts of folks of color that are leading work, find life-giving spaces, get to a church or an elder; other folks that look like you and live like you outside of the work, because it's a heavy load. And if you're not doing this, then start tomorrow. If there's anything from this time together with you, Mimi, it's examine your privilege. Do your work read, learn about critical race theory, implicit bias, and do better starting tomorrow and not on the backs of your staff of color or your peer leaders of color on your own dang back in your own time in your own therapy and with other white folks, and then come back and do better.

Dr. Mimi Choy-Brown ([42:14](#)):

Yeah, it seems to me, just from what you're talking about too is in the theme of doing your own work. If this is for white supervisors and supervisees listening, that this is both conflict, which we know is one of the things that people are most scared of, as well as, you know, issues of racial inequity and systemic racism. Which also people are uncomfortable with, and the reality that for folks of color, it's painful to watch people wake up to this today. And so it seems like there is this sort of moment that, I don't know, in supervision that it might play out.

Christina Haddad Gonzalez ([42:56](#)):

Well and the holding the shared experience of the conflict and where folks are at, in their racial equity journey is inevitably, the shared language is the discomfort, right? And so when I start my supervision course, I have this picture. And I think I can describe it is like a big circle. It says, I think your comfort level, your comfort, and then about three inches away as a smaller circle is your discomfort. And then an arrow points to the discomfort. And it says where the magic happens. And so I think folks with various privileges are really able to insulate themselves right into this kind of obliviousness. And then when we see some cracks where it's like, Ooh, that feels uncomfortable. I'm racist. Yep. Yeah. You are even myself. I uphold white supremacy, right? So, Ooh, I uphold white supremacy. I work towards whiteness.

Christina Haddad Gonzalez ([43:58](#)):

That's what I was taught beautifully to do, to work towards whiteness. Especially when we moved here from New York to Minnesota, ooohhh we. The messages, no more Arabic, hide your gold chain with the Cedars of Lebanon on it. Like just, just blend Christina. Right? So, but let's sit in that discomfort. I'm going to lean into a hard conversation this afternoon, and that's where I'm going to start. I'm going to say, and this is not a white supervisee. I'm going to say you've been defensive the last few meetings. And so before we start, I want you to know that we value you. And we're having this conversation as a growth and feedback opportunity. It's not an HR issue. It's not a performance issue for many other folks it would be. What I'm going to ask you to do so that when you become defensive to actually breathe into that felt defensiveness and name it.

Christina Haddad Gonzalez ([44:44](#)):

And I'm going to say to you that if I feel it or sense it, I'm going to name it too, and we're going to both breathe into it together. And I'm asking you to keep your mind open, to be curious and practice self-inquiry. Because when we know better, we do better. And that's what I want for you and end of this

conversation. That's it. So if it comes up where you're like, I don't feel valued, or you're not understanding, or I didn't, it was just a mistake or whatever it might be, listen to it, breathe in and let's keep going.

Dr. Mimi Choy-Brown ([45:16](#)):

Yeah. I love that. I love that. Just having that space to just, you don't have to do anything about it necessarily, but just to notice that it's there as a first step. That's amazing. I love that. So the final question that I have that I asked our guests is just, what's your dream for supervision, practice and child welfare. And perhaps what's needed to realize that dream. I think you've, you've talked a little bit about it already, but..

Christina Haddad Gonzalez ([45:46](#)):

I just started supervising a really good friend of mine. She was my peer in 1999. Then when I was promoted, she became my supervisee. She told me that when we were peers, she said to me, I don't do supervision. And so this is so funny. So when I got the promotion, like, she's like my buddy, I pulled her aside into a room and said, I'm going to be your boss. And then I said, and a while ago you told me you don't do supervision. And so I want to let you know, you're going to do supervision with me. And she was like, I can't believe you took what I told you as a friend, and then took me into this room in that little yellow house you worked in, and you're like, I'm your boss. And you're going to do supervision. I was like, oh my gosh, I love you.

Christina Haddad Gonzalez ([46:36](#)):

I love you too. And you're lucky. Right. But what I said after is I'm like, you still need supervision. I said, it's been 20 years. And so do I friend? She said, absolutely she, but she's laughing because she's like, you turn that right on me. I'm like I did. I did. And so I share that story because I'm like for the folks that think they need is the least are often the folks that need it the most, not the case of my friend, not her. I mean, it was literally an offhand comment, not at all this person, highly competent. However, my hope is that supervision supervision becomes as normalized as getting up and going to work. And that embedded in that container and that experience are components related to normalizing curiosity, trauma, and race informed. And just to comfort with like, we're never done. I mean, I always say when I teach, I mean, when I say I use every second to my one-on-one time with my own boss, I have an agenda.

Christina Haddad Gonzalez ([47:35](#)):

I take notes every single second. And I've been in the work now 22 years. And I've been in a leadership position for 15 of those and I every second. And so my hope for it is that when a child welfare worker says, I don't like this kid, or I really messed up that they can say, I need to get help. You know? And when I teach it, I talk a bit about my work in an organization on the north side, where we hired from the community with which we served. So many of our staff lived, worked, played and prayed with the folks they served. And then for a number of those it was the first time they made 34, \$37,000 a year. It's the first time they got a computer as part of their work in a cube and a cell phone.

Christina Haddad Gonzalez ([48:30](#)):

And all of them were folks of color. And I say to the class, their entire livelihoods, their ability to buy a home, to get their kid into a high quality early childhood setting to come off of government assistance was entirely transformed in one job offer. How willing do you think these supervisees were to come in

and say to me, I messed up and they say, not very willing right? In the beginning, not very willing. And so supervisors have a sensitivity to that. The power differential, I speak to the livelihood. There is privilege in mobility. There's privilege in me having a master's degree, right. That I can, it's not working. I'm a move around, but sensitivity to how for so many of our supervisees myself included, our livelihoods are hooked into the work that we do. And that, that inevitably creates reluctance. And then overlay that with racial, economic, social, linguistic gender, all the differences inherently about intersection and power, that impact my ability to go, I messed up.

Dr. Mimi Choy-Brown ([49:38](#)):

I am so grateful for your time today. And it makes me so hopeful that folks can, can continue to learn from you, in the Continuing Ed Series and also through the supervision class at the U. There's so many good nuggets of wisdom here that I hope folks can take and kind of reflect, and hopefully, maybe bring to their supervision on their agenda and try to shape that supervision to be what they need. So thank you.

Christina Haddad Gonzalez ([50:09](#)):

Thanks Mimi

Dr. Mimi Choy-Brown ([50:13](#)):

Thank you so much for joining me for this episode of The Heart of Supervision podcast that was produced in collaboration with the Center for Advanced Studies in Child Welfare. I really hope you enjoyed it and found something useful to bring back to your work. If so, please feel free to share it with your friends and colleagues. Again, I'm Mimi Choy-Brown. And I love to talk about all things, supervision and research. So if you have any feedback, questions, comments, or suggestions for topics of the podcast, please feel free to reach out to me at my email address, [mchoybro@umn.edu](mailto:mchoybro@umn.edu). I'd love to hear from you.

Speaker 4 ([50:54](#)):

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