During my internship I worked on a couple of different tasks. Rob, my supervisor, and I decided that we wanted my internship to be based around RRASC values, things that interested me, and the needs of Safe Passage. We met a few times towards the beginning of my internship to brainstorm project ideas. During those first few meetings we came up with the idea of making a resource to give to clients of Safe Passage with information regarding reproductive health resources in Hampshire County interspersed with grounding techniques, information about one’s rights as a patient, and definitions of words such as “triggered.” By the end of my internship, I had created a draft of the zine and am planning to meet with Rob to receive feedback and make edits to it.

During the beginning of my internship, I thought that making a podcast would be something really fun to do, but I didn’t really have the time to make it happen. I proposed creating a program through podcast about survivorship, especially relating to domestic violence. I thought it would be nice to create a resource for folks who may not be able to come into the office and get the resource sheet or go to a physical location to learn more and get support. I wanted to make transcriptions of the podcasts available online with the resource sheet so that people could access support through multiple channels. I also wanted to cover topics such as the neurobiology of trauma, talking to a partner or friend about your experiences and finding support, finding resources and help, knowing your legal options, etc.. With this project, I thought it would be important to ask people what they wanted to hear about specifically, so that we could best reach the audience and help them where it was most needed.
I can definitely see myself pursuing this idea in the future, perhaps as part of my thesis project at Hampshire. As far as I know right now, there aren’t any podcasts made by survivors for survivors. I think it’s important to include the voices of those who have been affected by violence as well as to include information through a more “scholarly” lens. I think that completing this project will force me to think more about my role as a survivor as well as someone who studies issues of domestic violence and intimate partner violence (which I’m not sure makes me a scholar per se, but adds complexity to my identity as a survivor).

Along with these two projects, I attended volunteer training for four weeks in June so that I could do direct service work in the shelter. Rob asked me to be critical of the training process and make recommendations as to what could be changed or done better during the next training session. As of right now, I have made a few recommendations, and am in the process of compiling more of my thoughts into a cohesive document.

Towards the end of my internship, Rob approached me about making changes to the way Safe Passage’s internship programs were run. For the past couple of weeks, myself, Rob, and another intern have been meeting to brainstorm ways to improve and essentially create a functioning internship program at Safe Passage. This project is far from over, and because I will be in the area for school, I plan to continue working on it throughout the school year.

I think the skill I used most often during my internship was time management. Somedays I finished the work I had planned for myself more quickly than others, and I realized that I would need to either assign myself more work, or find something else to do. With that came the need for me to figure out which projects I would actually have time to accomplish to a degree that I felt good about. Because of the projects I was initially working on, I used the computer often and
found myself using programs like Google Docs to complete my work. When I started working in the shelter, I spent most of my time either tidying up the basement or taking care of the children in the shelter. Sometimes things between guests in the shelter got a little heated, and it was my job to take care of the children and keep them calm and occupied while their parents attended to other tasks. I never had to use this skill, but it was helpful for me to know what to do if a child had said something to me regarding the abuse they may have faced or any emotional concerns they had. I was lucky enough to work a bit with the children’s advocate at Safe Passage before working in the shelter, and she taught me about how to handle emotionally challenging situations with children specifically.

I think the most difficult thing I faced during my internship was navigating my identity as a survivor doing this work. I had begun the process of volunteer training when it was offered last winter, but found myself unable to complete it because at the time I found it to be too triggering. It was really amazing for me to go through the training again and realize how far I’ve come in my healing in only a few months. I also made the decision to go back to therapy, and am really grateful to have a therapist that I feel comfortable navigating my healing with. There’s also a part of me that feels good knowing I am providing some sort of support to other survivors, and can continue to do so.

My supervisor really made my experience at Safe Passage special. On the first day, Rob sat down with me and told me that he wanted me to feel comfortable there, and that he tries his best to run a guilt and shame-free workplace. With his saying that, I immediately felt at ease. Rob really took the time to get to know me, and was very honest with me about his experiences working at Safe Passage, something I greatly appreciated. I also really enjoyed meeting the other people on staff and getting to know them and how what they do keeps the organization afloat.
There are a lot of really wonderful and inspiring people working at Safe Passage, and a lot of really wonderful and inspirational people who use their services. I continue to be in awe of the people I had the pleasure of meeting. They’ve all taught me something.

My academic studies really helped me with this internship! At Hampshire, I study the healing of sexual trauma through theatre and dance, so I felt kind of prepared when I came to Safe Passage. I know quite a bit more than I thought I did about trauma, and that came in handy. My internship aligned really well with my studies and actually helped me advance them in ways I was not expecting. I spent a lot of time at the beginning of my internship reading and researching domestic violence and sexual assault, which led me to information I may not have found otherwise. At Hampshire I also spend a lot of time doing work independently, which came in handy at my internship. Because of this I was able to figure out what I wanted to do and decide how I would spend my time in order to accomplish the tasks I had given myself. I can honestly say that this internship really reinforced the fact that I want to be doing this work for the rest of my life. I loved every second of my internship, and although it was difficult at times, I was always learning, growing, and excited. That’s not something you can say about just anything.

I loved my internship and the organization I worked for. There are definitely things that can be improved at Safe Passage, which I think is true of all organizations, but the staff seems very actively committed to making positive change. I think one of the flaws I saw was a growing separation among those who do more logistical tasks and those who meet with clients — it’s hard to make positive change for a specific population if you forget about why you are doing the work that you do. I also think that a lot of people in the organization are severely overworked (which is something that administrators seem to be aware of).
I definitely learned more about the intersections of reproductive rights and social justice issues. It was interesting for me to think about reproductive rights through a domestic violence lens, and to think about what sorts of problems a survivor may run into if they have to seek reproductive services. The volunteer training also taught me a lot about working with specific populations of domestic violence survivors, which made me think about how identity impacts the way people access healthcare.

My only suggestions for potential future interns are to remember to take care of yourself, and to be kind to yourself. It’s okay if you miss a day of work because you weren’t feeling able to come in! I have found that it’s easier to take care of others when you are taking care of yourself. It was also really helpful for me to remind myself that I got this internship for a reason, and that I shouldn’t be too hard on myself. I am proud of what I have accomplished, and excited for the future. It’s okay to be proud of yourself and the work that you do, even if you don’t think it’s perfect.