

### **Statement of Leadership and Advocacy**

One of my core beliefs related to human nature is that humans are primarily social beings. This idea began to form when I was in elementary school and only became stronger as the years went on and I had experiences of both feeling excluded and included in different social settings. My bachelor's degree in communication helped to solidify my foundational understanding of how communication, social interaction, and language develops, and also how important it is to our functioning as a society and as individuals. Much of my master's degree was focused on the core theorists and theoretical orientations in psychology and family studies and it was only in passing that we explored the impact of social interaction on our mental health and overall well-being. It wasn't until several years after graduating that I began to explore theories that best fit with my core understanding of human experience. While I did engage in evidence-based interventions in my work with clients, I did not have a firm grasp on the underlying mechanisms that allow for dysfunction and healing. As I began to explore my own counseling identity, and entered into this doctoral program, I became more and more aligned with many of the ideas that Alfred Adler introduced to the field. Adler's belief in community belonging and the importance of social roles (*gemeinschaftsgefühl*) fully explained with my own learned, anecdotal, and observed understanding of the human condition.

This all being said, while much of the clinical counseling work that I do is related to my client's perception and understanding of their experiences, it also very much relies on the interactions and dynamics between myself and my clients. I often do this by incorporating an boundaried egalitarian relationship to humanize both myself and my client, as well as focus on my client's community engagement, social supports, and interpersonal and intrapersonal reflections. Well, I do introduce evidence-based interventions from other modalities into my clinical counseling work, the foundation and orientation that I work from is one that can best be explained as Adlerian, also known as Individual Psychology.

It is in this combination of continuing my own clinical practice and interest in teaching and educating future counselors that I feel I can best serve my community. By offering a safe place to process, learn, and explore, I hope to allow my clients and students to leave the space we engage in together and enter into their own community in a more stable, healthy, and positive manner. I believe our job as clinical counselors and as counselor educators is to encourage and help continue to shift social dynamics toward inclusivity, equity, and compassion. In fact, on a

broad global scale, I believe it all of our collective responsibility to make the world a better place in whatever way is accessible, manageable, and conducive to skill, temperament, and personal and professional interest. This applies to individuals, communities, professional associations and organizations, and local, national and international governments (though perhaps this last one is wishful thinking).

Counselor educators hold three main responsibilities. The first is to be an ethically sound and compassionate counselor to clients. The second is to be a well-rounded and knowledgeable educator for students. The third is to advocate for equity and positive change in the communities that we serve. Each of these tasks require leadership in some capacity. My definition of leadership is to circle those we lead in support, compassion, and guidance so that they may meet their goals. The idea of “circling” feels appropriately descriptive as at times leaders must be willing and able to lead from in front, from beside, and from behind. These three leadership positions are required regardless of how the role of the leader is presenting itself, either in the context of being a counselor, an educator, or advocate. This is stated in the American Counseling Association’s Code of Ethics, as well as in the shared (if sometimes unspoken) culture that counselor educators all participate in.

I engage in leadership from a foundation similar the Path-Goal leadership model which acknowledges that leaders often engage in multiple roles within an organization and are able to adapt from one to another depending on the setting, the members, and the context the given situation. I often in switch between these 4 roles (1. Directive, 2). Supportive, 3. Participatory, and 4. Achievement-Oriented Leadership) when I am in positions of leadership (as a manager, supervisor, and even counselor) depending on my understanding of the circumstances in front of me. I also rely on being direct and transparent in response to the role I am occupying to provide structure, clear expectations, and ensure safety. I want the spaces I work in to feel safe and supportive, but I also know that my job as a leader is to ensure the safety of those around me and to ensure that important tasks are being accomplished properly (writing documentation, completing safety assessments and plans, handling money, following laws and ethical guidelines). I do my best to balance this directive approach by being supportive to my supervisees or those I am leading so they can maintain a balanced life at home and at work. I want them to feel as though I am human and approachable and that I know they are human and respect them. I want them to feel safe coming to me with questions, concerns, and even mistakes.

I also find that by participating in tasks alongside members (such as helping with academic assignments or documentation wording, participating in case conceptualization discussions, or assisting in a cleaning project) rather than just delegating to others both increases moral and increases their willingness to complete tasks on their own when delegation is needed. Finally, setting goals is not only motivating to myself, but is also motivating to those working with me. An example of this is creating an assignment for students that is interesting but also challenging for them. We are not very likely to write a paper simply because we are interested in the subject matter, but when a course grade (and future career) might be relying on the paper we are more likely to spend time and energy accomplishing that task. Doing something simply for the sake of doing often does not lead to consistent measurable results and is not as satisfying as working hard to accomplish a challenging task.

Another reason why I identify with the Path-Goal model of leadership is that it is explicit and concrete. The different roles of the leader are outlined in a way that I did not see as clearly in the other models discussed by Lewis. Being able to directly point to leadership style I am engaging in at a specific moment within the context of the Path-Goal model feels tangible. In the same way that the Integrative Developmental Model (IDM) of supervision outlines specific stages of professional developmental growth (the model for supervision that I most closely follow) the Path-Goal model outlines the specific ‘interventions’ used to facilitate goal accomplishment for the organization and the member/employee/supervisee. Other specific theories I have reviewed are not as clear-cut in what to expect and the different ways to engage in a leadership role.

Finally, the Path-Goal model has shown positive results when used in educational settings both between teachers and students and teachers and supervisors. Knowing that one of my career goals is to become a professor and continue to work within academic settings, and knowing within these career path I will be placed in leadership roles (even if only as the instructor in a classroom), knowing that this model has indicated an increase in both teacher and student success and satisfaction is an important consideration.