

An Adlerian Alliance Supervisory Model for School Counseling

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Abstract

A theoretical framework is presented describing the integration of the Working Alliance and Adlerian Supervision. An Adlerian Alliance Supervisory Model (AASM) is presented as a supervisory approach that infuses the standards of the American School Counselor Association's National Model. Components considered being essential parts of the AASM: The Supervisory Working Alliance, Adlerian Supervision, and the ASCA National Model are presented. A case study illustrates the use of the AASM applied within a school counseling setting. Implications for counselor education and supervision and school counseling are provided.

Keywords: school counseling supervision, counselor education

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The American School Counselor Association's (ASCA, 2005) National Model for School Counseling Programs has profoundly influenced the school counseling profession. Standards from this model delineate a new vision for school counseling. These standards are presented at a time when the identity of school counseling has been subject to a critical examination (Akos & Scarborough, 2004; Dollarhide & Miller, 2006; Page, Pietrzak, & Sutton, 2001; Pérusse, Goodnough, & Noël, 2001, Studer & Oberman, 2006). The ASCA model transforms the school counselors' role as an advocate, change agent, consultant, collaborator, and leader.

Few supervision models, however, meet the complex needs of the transformed school counselor. Recently, the journal of *Counselor Education and Supervision* devoted an entire issue (i.e., Volume 45 Issue 4) to supervisory models for school counseling. Several approaches to school counseling supervision were emphasized including the adaptation of existing models and the application of these models within the school setting (Luke & Bernard, 2006; Peterson & Deuschle, 2006). New models were presented which infused the ASCA (2005) National Model (Wood & Rayle, 2006). These models are considered revolutionary in their attempts to address the supervision needs of the transformed school counselor. However, they address the mechanical tasks of supervision and not the process of supervision.

Researchers have reported a discrepancy between the actual delivery of school counseling supervision and the desire to receive such supervision (Page, Pietrzak, & Sutton, 2001). Moreover, the preparation of school counselors related to practicum and internship requirements as well as shared and non-shared experiences has received

increasing attention within counseling literature (e.g., Page, Pietrzak, & Sutton).

Researchers have suggested that these areas of concern coupled with the transformed school counselor's functions, responsibilities, and roles may lead to a diffused school counseling identity.

These concerns and considerations provide the rationale to develop a model of supervision that specifically accounts for the vast responsibilities and functions in which school counselors operate. In addition, the development of a supervision model explicitly generated in response to the ASCA (2005) National Model provides a more congruent identity and subsequent support for school counselors. Consequently, the authors have developed a model of school counseling supervision which specifically integrates the components of the ASCA National Model into a school counseling supervision model.

Essential Components

The model created by the authors encompasses elements of Bordin's (1983) Supervisory Working Alliance (SWA) and the Adlerian Supervisory Model (Lemberger & Dollarhide, 2006; McMahon & Fall, 2006; Milliren, Clemmer, & Wingett, 2006; Tobin & McCurdy, 2006). These supervisory components integrated with the salient areas of the ASCA National Model is hereafter referred to as the Adlerian Alliance Supervisory Model (AASM). AASM is an inclusive model which provides a framework for supervisors to enhance school counselors' professional development and support the utilization of the ASCA National School Counseling Standards.

The ASCA National Model and School Counseling Supervision

In the last ten years, professional school counseling has undergone tremendous change, fueled by the efforts of the Education Trust's Transforming School Counseling Initiative (n.d.) and the ASCA National Model (2005). According to the ASCA National Model, it is recommended that school counselors adopt the roles of leader, advocate, collaborator, and systemic change agent by implementing comprehensive, preventative, and developmentally appropriate school counseling programs that meet the needs of the school's population. ASCA calls upon school counselors to perform these roles in order to support the functional levels of a school counseling program. As leaders, school counselors are to outline their philosophies about what every student should know and be able to perform (ASCA). Therefore supervision in school counseling would revolve around the roles and functions of practicum and internship students.

In conclusion, the skills required by this new vision school counselor vastly differ from the skills required by community and mental health counselors. However, the average graduate preparation program may only have one or two courses that specifically train school counselors for the unique roles and functions they will serve, and therefore may not adequately address the skills and tasks required to implement a comprehensive program in the school setting (Coker & Schrader, 2004; Paisley & Hayes, 2003). Without adequate supervision of the preparation or conceptualization of the skills necessary for school counselors to plan, implement, and evaluate a comprehensive school counseling program, individuals may enter their first position as a professional school counselor – without a sense of focus or identity. A model that infuses the ASCA components within supervision perhaps can prepare prepares them

for the unique roles and skills required by the transformed school counselor (Wood & Rayle, 2006).

Supervisory Working Alliance

The SWA (Bordin, 1979, 1983) is considered essential when supervising school counselors, particularly when they are expected to implement recommended ASCA model components. As outlined by Bordin (1983), the SWA is grounded within a pantheoretical construct, which conceptualizes the relationship between the supervisor and supervisee as a mutual collaboration that is essential to the process of supervisory success (Bordin, 1979, 1983). The strength of the relationship within the alliance is a product of the supervisor's and supervisee's ability to dynamically operate within three components (Bordin, 1979, 1994). The components which comprise the working alliance construct include bond, goals, and tasks (Bordin). These components are viewed as the active ingredients in the strengthening and rebuilding of the supervisory relationship.

SWA emphasizes the building of bonds, the development of goals, and the agreement of tasks to accomplish (Bordin, 1983). Pragmatically these supervisory functions provide an effective placement for the ASCA National Standards. Specifically due to the pantheoretical nature of the model in addition to its components creates an optimal environment for the supervision of the transformed school counselor. Consequently, supervisors and supervisees may develop the supervisory bond, create goals, and determine tasks that will address the needs of the school counselor.

Adlerian Supervision

Adlerian Supervision operates primarily within the tenets of Individual Psychology. Adlerian Supervision may be regarded as containing three components: Foundation, content, and process. With respect to the foundation, Adlerian Supervision is conceptualized as holistic and inclusive (Lemberger & Dollarhide, 2006; McMahon & Fall, 2006). Moreover, the supervisory relationship is perceived as horizontal rather than vertical, and is mutually explorative (Lemberger & Dollarhide; McMahon & Fall). Exploration of these process variables provides the foundation for the supervisory and supervisee to develop and negotiate supervisory content in a collaborative manner. The negotiation of supervision content illustrates the presenting needs of supervisee as well as the supervisee's conceptualization of the client's concerns (Lemberger & Dollarhide, 2006). Supervisory content is mutually explored in order to illustrate lifestyle themes, contextual viewpoints, social influences, and associated counseling styles as they pertain to the supervisee's perceptions of the client and the client's needs (Lemberger & Dollarhide; Milliren, Clemmer, & Wingett, 2006). Through the examination of such influences the supervisor and supervisee are provided with the opportunity to identify variables which may be interfering with the supervisee's ability to adequately place the needs of the client above his or her guiding interests (Lemberger & Dollarhide; Milliren, Clemmer, & Wingett).

The process of Adlerian Supervision represents a fluid progression focused on improvement of both supervisee and client (Lemberger & Dollarhide, 2006; Milliren, Clemmer, & Wingett, 2006). The inherent fluid properties of the supervisory process facilitates the examination of social interest, which manifests in the supervisee's

counseling style as well as the restructuring of the conceptualizations of the client's needs and goals (Lemberger & Dollarhide; Milliren, Clemmer, & Wingett). The facilitation of such supervisee awareness is supported by continual supervisor encouragement as well as consciousness-raising (Lemberger & Dollarhide; Milliren, Clemmer, & Wingett). Accordingly, the fundamental goal of Adlerian Supervision is to facilitate the development of new contextual viewpoints held by the supervisee, which enhances awareness of self and client (Lemberger & Dollarhide). Therefore, Adlerian Supervision may be considered an optimal ingredient for supervising school counselors. The supervisory relationship is considered egalitarian and creates the mutual exploration of variables which may be influencing the delivery of services.

School Counseling Supervision

The authors believe that school counseling supervision models should: 1) be based on the roles and functions of the ASCA (2005) National Model; 2) promote insight into the school counselor's beliefs about students and how these beliefs might influence their delivery of services within the school, and: 3) promote insight into the school system/culture. Therefore, the authors of the present article believe that the AASM, as detailed in the following sections, is better suited for promoting the exploration of the supervisee's philosophies, insight into the systemic and cultural properties of the school environment, and the impact that these variables have on the supervisee's ability to implement a comprehensive school counseling program in the schools. The AASM's theoretical basis is described in detail in the following sections.

Adlerian Alliance Supervisory Model Overview

The AASM represents a holistic approach to school counseling supervision, which combines the focal components of the SWA (Bordin, 1983), Adlerian Supervision (Lemberger & Dollarhide, 2006; McMahon & Fall, 2006; Milliren, Clemmer, & Wingett, 2006; Tobin & McCurdy, 2006), and the ASCA (2003) National Model. AASM represents a symbiotic union between supervisory approaches, which illustrates the positive aspects of both models as well as the accumulated strength of their integration. The primary function of the incorporation of the SWA modality provides the intended structure for the rich and extensive functions of Adlerian Supervision. The arrangement of such supervisory approaches provides a desirable structure for the supervisory process, and for the incorporation of the roles and functions of school counselors, as outlined by the ASCA National Model.

AASM operates exclusively within the tenets of mutual exploration and collaborative efforts. These main facets provide the essential cornerstone to serve as the vehicle of supervisory success as well as supervisee accomplishment. AASM may be conceptualized as employing the similar structure of the SWA (i.e., bonds, goals, tasks); however, the Adlerian portion of the alliance provides a desired level of thoroughness and dyadic exploration. The amalgamation of these models is theoretically housed within the aim and scope of the comprehensive school counseling model proposed by ASCA (2005), and the integrative approach naturally creates the opportunity to incorporate the functions, systems, and identities of the transformed school counselor. Owing to the inherent fluidity of AASM, the model provides the structure and explorative factors essential to supporting the personal and professional

development of school counselors while simultaneously reinforcing the standards proposed by ASCA.

Components

AASM is comprised of three components: Adlerian Bonds, Collaborative Goals, and Task Agreement. These three factors share an inherent reciprocal relationship and the strength of each factor impacts each other facet.

Adlerian Bond. In order to develop a strong Adlerian Bond within supervision, it is essential that both supervisor and supervisee enter the supervisory relationship as mutual explorative partners. The emphasis on mutual exploration provides one of the main vehicles for the success of the supervisory relationship and subsequent supervisee development. Through this active collaboration, both supervisor and supervisee have the opportunity to communicate and explore varying perceptions of contextual worldviews, lifestyle choices, and ideas regarding social interest and social justice. These viewpoints influence the roles of the involved parties, and a thoughtful understanding of such views can lead to greater respect and empathy within the supervisory relationship. Furthermore, the mutual exploration and communication of these viewpoints strengthens the supervisory bond. The discussion of supervisor and supervisee worldviews and contextual viewpoints provides insight into the intentions and private logic of both the supervisor and supervisee. Under AASM, the supervisor must emphasize mutual exploration very early in the supervisory setting. Supervisors in this context should attempt to provide an optimally safe environment for their supervisees to voice their concerns, opinions, beliefs, and attitudes. These explorative

elements are not restricted to the counseling profession and identity but rather may extend to personal elements as well.

Although supervisors across all settings would benefit from an increased understanding of how their past experiences and fundamental beliefs contribute to their performance within a therapeutic setting, school counselors – who act as advocates and systemic change agents within the academic, personal/social, and career development lives of children – cannot afford to neglect this area of insight. For example, a school counselor from a middle class background who works in a school with a high level of poverty must understand how her educational experience may affect her ability to objectively view her school, students, their families, and the community as a whole. The school counselor should also understand how her perceptions may impact her ability to develop a school counseling program, and should be cognizant of developing a school counseling program that actually serves the students' needs, and not the counselor's personal beliefs about the students' needs.

Furthermore, school counselors will benefit from AASM because the model supports the supervisor's and supervisee's insight into the unique cultural and systemic properties within the supervisee's field site. Students themselves create a culture, and the school counseling supervisee must understand this culture in order to operate effectively within its constraints. Complicating the school counselor's ability to work effectively within the school is the presence of the additional cultural and systemic influences of the teachers, administrators, families, and community. All of these stakeholders interact in a way that forms the overall system in which the school counselor operates. In order to act as a collaborator, the supervisee must understand

the stakeholders' contextual viewpoints. Therefore, within AASM supervisors and supervisees are encouraged to actively explore the systemic layers of the school and how they may affect the school counselor's roles, responsibilities, functions, and professional identity within the school. Through this exploration, supervisees might begin to understand how to navigate these systemic layers in order to provide students with the maximum benefits of the school counseling program. Additionally, the examination of these factors provides the supervisor and supervisee with the opportunity to identify patterns of student case conceptualizations and possible misperceptions. These conceptualizations and potential misperceptions are related to the services that school counselors provide and should therefore be illustrated and corrected when necessary. Thus, through the Adlerian Bonds component of the AASM, the supervisor and supervisee have the opportunity to examine the multiple factors that impact the school counselor's work in the school setting.

Collaborative Goals. Collaborative Goals within the AASM represent the negotiated goal structure of the SWA model; however, these collaborative goals focus on the core components of Adlerian Supervision. Within this context, the supervisor and supervisee collaboratively develop goals that will expose the supervisee to the various roles of the transformed school counselor. If the supervisee is not able to practice these roles in the actual school setting, then the Collaborative Goals component allows the supervisee to conceptualize the roles and functions. This collaborative goal setting and attainment will ultimately lead to professional growth and a heightened sense of professional identity. Since the Adlerian Bonds component promotes insight into private logic, worldviews, intentions, and lifestyles, Collaborative Goals provides the opportunity

for the supervisory relationship to address guiding conceptions that may interfere with the school counselor's ability to objectively view students and to solidify his or her presence within the school.

As previously noted the school counselor who operates within a comprehensive developmental program provides a multitude of services and assumes several identities. Therefore, the supervisor and supervisee should also mutually concentrate on goals relating to the counselor's ability to function within a comprehensive school counseling program, as outlined by the ASCA (2003) National Model. The Collaborative Goal component of Adlerian Alliances encourages school counselors to actively examine these various services and identify how the school counselor's performance of such activities contributes to the overall mission of the school. If the supervisor and supervisee cannot determine the significance of certain activities, the pair should mutually examine alternative activities and means of delivery. In this way, the school counselor learns to utilize the accountability function of the comprehensive school counseling program in order to enhance the delivery system function.

After determining these collaborative goals, the supervisor and supervisee should focus on goals related to systemic change within the school system. The focus on systemic change operates primarily within the context of creative alternatives and focuses on the supervisee's ability to work as an advocate within the school system. In addition, under the Collaborative Goals component, the supervisor and supervisee should collectively examine their beliefs about social justice and how these beliefs might influence the school counselor's professional identity and impact his or her work within the school system. Furthermore, the supervisee's global and systemic social interest

should be mutually explored as a goal of the relationship in order to work toward implementing social interests in other levels of the school counselor's functioning in addition to the school. The area of global and systemic interest within the supervisory relationship enhances the school counselor's identity as an advocate, agent of change, leader, and collaborator.

Task Agreement. The Task Agreement component of Adlerian Alliances addresses the collaborative goals established in the supervisory relationship. Agreed upon tasks to accomplish the supervisee's goals provide both the supervisor and supervisee with the opportunity to creatively explore the ways in which these goals may be met. Certain tasks that may enhance the ability to accomplish essential goals include role-playing, active identification, and open dialogue.

When the supervisor and supervisee agree to use role-play as a supervision task, the pair may wish to develop scenarios which depict the systemic properties of the school and a hypothetical issue a school counselor may face. The role-playing approach may provide both the supervisor and the supervisee the opportunity to identify the supervisee's method of navigating through the various aspects of the school system, the school counselor's thought processes regarding such interactions, and potential creative alternatives for problem solving. Since many school counseling supervisees will conduct their practicum, internship, or initial professional experiences in a school that does not embrace the ASCA (2003) National Model for School Counseling Programs, the role-play component of Task Agreement may be the only opportunity for the supervisee to conceptualize how a comprehensive school counseling program can be delivered in a school. Furthermore, in the presence of systems that do not support or

embrace comprehensive school counseling programs, the role-play task can help the supervisee learn to navigate the school system and advocate for his or her position in the school.

The active identification task provides the supervisee with the opportunity to explore and conceptualize the roles, identities, and functions he or she provides in the school system. The active identification tasks create the prospect for school counselors to explore their perceptions, strivings, competence, and efficacy with respect to the aforementioned functions. This task promotes the forming of the supervisee's identity as a professional school counselor.

The open dialogue task option provides both the supervisee and supervisor the opportunity to collaboratively identify, clarify, and modify the dyad's perceptions of roles and functions the school counselor. This task also allows the supervisor and supervisee to safely explore the supervisee's school culture and examine the supervisee's beliefs about the culture.

Case Study

The following fictional case study illustrates how the AASM of School Counselor Supervision creates a supervisory environment that fosters the professional growth of school counselors in training. Maria is a school counselor in training and is currently conducting her practicum at an elementary school. Maria is also a third grade teacher at the school, and intends to utilize her planning period to work with students to obtain direct hours. Although Maria has received some basic instruction in school counseling roles and program delivery, she is uncertain about the types of services she is able to deliver in the school, and how to go about delivering these services. There is not a

comprehensive school counseling program currently in place at Maria's school. There is only one counselor at the school, and he is Maria's site supervisor. This site supervisor spends the majority of his time doing paperwork for the special education program and working with individual students as certain problem situations arise. He is excited about the opportunity to mentor Maria, and is very willing to share some of his work with her. Specifically, the site supervisor asks Maria to work with several fourth and fifth grade boys who have been referred by their teachers for behavior problems.

Maria and her university supervisor have met a few times and are operating within the framework of the AASM. During these initial sessions, Maria and her university supervisor worked on developing a strong supervisory relationship, encompassing the Adlerian Bond component of the AASM. As a result of this Adlerian Bonds component, Maria and her supervisor explored Maria's beliefs about students, student achievement, and the overall school system. Through this explorative process, the pair became aware of Maria's deeply embedded belief in the ability of all students to be successful in school when provided with the support and encouragement necessary to do so. Accordingly, Maria and her university supervisor collaboratively developed goals that would enhance Maria's professional growth within the school counseling setting. The Collaborative Goals identified by the pair focused on conceptualizing and planning a comprehensive school counseling program, practicing the roles and functions required by school counselors operating within an ASCA (2003) model program, and understanding how the various systems inherent within the school and Maria's own beliefs and contextual views influence her ability to deliver these counseling services.

During the third supervision meeting, Maria expresses some frustration about her work with the fourth and fifth grade boys. Maria has met with the boys individually, as per her site supervisor's instructions, but feels that the individual sessions are consuming her time and are not impacting the boys' behavior in the classroom. Maria feels safe discussing her frustration because she and her supervisor have a strong bond, and the supervisor has established a safe and open setting for the exploration of thoughts, feelings, and creative alternatives. The university supervisor encourages Maria to utilize the ASCA (2005) accountability function to evaluate the effectiveness of her service delivery. Maria decides she will collect discipline referral data and will consult with the boys' teachers and ask about their performance in the classroom since she began working with them.

The following session, Maria reports that the boys' behaviors have not improved. Furthermore, in collecting data, Maria recognized a pattern of disruptive behavior stemming from several other male students in the upper grade levels. The university supervisor encourages Maria to utilize the data she collected to drive her delivery of services. Through the AASM Task Agreement component, Maria and her supervisor use open dialogue to discuss possible alternatives for working with these boys. Additionally, through active identification Maria begins to examine the boys' lifestyles and worldviews, and develops an understanding of some of their potential reasons for behaving inappropriately in class. During the Adlerian Bonds component, Maria identified her core belief in the ability of every student to be successful when provided with the appropriate encouragement and support. The university supervisor asks Maria to reflect on this belief when developing an intervention for the boys. Maria and her

supervisor then proceed to identify interventions through the open dialogue task under the Task Agreement component. As a result of this open dialogue, Maria develops a creative alternative to working with these students; she decides she would like to develop a small group for these boys. Maria and her supervisor develop collaborative goals for the group, including teaching the boys about appropriate behaviors and why these behaviors are important, engaging members of the community who might expose the boys to diverse situations requiring responsible behavior, and providing incentives for the boys' continued use of their learned skills. Maria plans the small group and develops pre- and post- measures of student outcome data, which will be used to evaluate the group's effectiveness. Maria shares her accountability plan with her supervisor, and together they modify the plan as needed.

Maria and her supervisor then use the open dialogue and active identification tasks to discuss how the various systems in the school may react to the club idea. Based on their insight into the current school counselor's (who is also Maria's site supervisor) contextual view, Maria and her supervisor feel confident that the school counselor will support the small group. However, Maria and her supervisor are concerned that the idea may not be as well received by the school administration, who does not want students to be outside of class during instructional time. Maria and her supervisor agree to practice Maria's proposal to the administrators through role-play. During this task, the pair provides feedback regarding the proposal and reshapes the proposal in order to demonstrate to the administrators how the group's goals are aligned with the administration's goals.

Throughout the entire supervisory experience, Maria and her supervisor engaged in a collaborative exploration of goals and accomplished these goals through Task Agreement, strengthened by a strong Adlerian Bond. As a result of this supervision, Maria was able to develop a thorough understanding of how her contextual views influence her work in the school, use data to drive her counseling intervention services, collaborate with community stakeholders, advocate for a group of potentially at-risk boys, develop a creative alternative for delivering services, navigate the various systemic layers within the school, align the counseling program's goals with the overall goals of the school, and demonstrate the counseling program's effectiveness through the use of outcome data. Ultimately, Maria developed a strong understanding of the tasks and functions necessary to develop, implement, and evaluate a comprehensive school counseling program.

Implications

AASM within the context of school counseling supervision provides the support for school counselors in developing a professional identity consistent with the ASCA (2005) National Model. The implementation and utilization of such a model presents itself to counselor educators as an additional tool for providing optimal supervision and training to school counselors. The infusion of theoretical constructs as well as the ASCA National Model offers counselor educators as well as school counselors the opportunity to provide the foundational services within comprehensive school counseling programs while simultaneously developing a strong and congruent school counselor identity.

It is prudent for counselor educators to be aware of the changing needs and demands placed upon trainees. The creation of national models as well as the

professional identities of school counselors should be taken into consideration during preparation and supervision. Consequently, the employment of AASM in supervision and training, provide school counselors with the prospect to learn the supervisory skills necessary for future supervisory situations. Through the pattern of identity exploration and congruency, future school counseling interns and counselors may tailor the essential components of the AASM model to fit the needs of individual programs at the same time meeting the requirements of the ASCA National Model.

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