Chapter 2:

Advocating Student-within-Environment as a Systems Theory to School Counseling

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Chapter 2 Abstract

In this chapter, the Advocating Student-within-Environment (ASE) theory for school counseling is explicated. The need for a theory specific to school counseling is discussed, especially considering the distinct features of school setting and the particular roles and responsibilities of a school counselor. The ASE approach suggests that students' experiences are co-determined by their internal capacities and their various ecological influences, therefore any intervention must be respondent to each as co-determinants of experience, personal development, and systemic change. The "5 Cs of ASE theory" are introduced, including curiosity, connectedness, co-regulation, compassion, and contribution.

Various creatures transmit messages across generations, each intending to prepare the subsequent generation and contribute to their survival and thriving. Although providing guidance and support is not entirely unique to humans, there appear to be no other species that erect enduring buildings of education or scrutinize teaching and learning with similar intention, formality, and duration. The sundry activities in K-12 schools are impressive, as they stretch across histories, disciplines, and cultures that are webbed together into complex systems.

The systems of webs that exist in the school are further tethered to other webs, with students, educators, and other stakeholders coming together as a fulcrum that binds the various external cultural systems to each of the personal and social systems that exist in schools. Each person entering a school carries arrays of prior influences that collide with those held by numerous other groups and persons, culminating in a genuine latticework of perspectives and governors of experience. These webs of experience affect the curricular content and the interpersonal relationships between students and students, students and educators, and students and other social forces extending beyond the school walls.

These systems of webs are incredibly complex to navigate for young students, educators, and other school stakeholders. Even if the complex social forces were consistently apparent and accessible to the players in the school, one could be easily overwhelmed by the sheer complicatedness of a school. Unfortunately, the constituent ingredients across all the personal and social systems affecting schools are not readily perceptible, nonetheless fairly distributed. Instead, baked into these systems are differing agendas, abilities, and histories or trajectories that amplify the complexity and inequalities of opportunities.

Maneuvering the various systems in schools can be challenging and yet critical for schooling success, broadly defined. In this manner, school counselors can be essential allies for

students, educators, and stakeholders. A school counselor supports the total school environment and all the participants therein through defining standards of practice, delivering direct and indirect student services, managing programs, and assessing the efficacy of school processes and outcomes (ASCA, 2019). The school counselor reflects a proxy agent in a school as described by Bandura (1986; 1989); that is, when the capacity of one or more individuals in a school is subjacent to others, the proxy can provide the support that is more compatible with the various systems active in the school.

Amplifying the capacity of compromised students, educators, or stakeholders is generally laudable, and yet it can inadvertently contribute to unintended complicity in inimical schooling environments. Education, by nature, oscillates between importing messages from various social institutions and breaking free to new vistas of understanding and functioning. The promise of education suggests that it is insufficient to simply reproduce cultural artifacts and histories into perpetuity (Baudrillard, 1983). Education should incite humanistic innovation and variation that serves the broadest conception of society (Dewey, 1916). Here the potential of the school counselor is again pertinent, as a school counselor moves alongside the various systems in schools while stoking the individual student or educator to forge new meanings, accomplish new ends, and innovate new permutations within the affecting systems.

Unfortunately, the profession of school counseling shoulders a precarious history as influenced by allied mental health professions, educational structures, and even features internal to the profession itself (Borders & Drury, 1992; Levy & Lemberger-Truelove, 2021). School counseling services are often under-utilized and generally misunderstood across school settings, which in turn relegates many professionals to administrative roles (Burnham & Jackson, 2000;

Dollarhide, Smith, & Lemberger, 2007). It is also likely that many well-intentioned school counselors have not operated in ways that best support students or their communities.

Formal theoretical approaches to practice are intended to combat against such role ambiguity and resource waste. At best, theory should reflect the systems that manifest them; theories consider said systems, offer parsimonious and effectual descriptions of the past, or make predictions for the future. For school counseling in particular, any appropriate formal theory should be germane to the systems of education and the development of people across the lifespan and yet also embrace these histories enough to encourage new permutations into the future.

Inspired by innovations across multiple academic and practice disciplines, the Advocating Student-within-Environment (ASE) (Lemberger, 2010; Lemberger & Hutchison, 2014; Lemberger-Truelove & Bowers, 2019) theory was explicitly designed for school counselors to work with students, educators, and other school-related persons so that individual capacities ripen into co-regulated experiences and outcomes. ASE operates from the assumption that all players in the school are indivisible, with varying degrees of influence on the total schooling system. Development of the individual person or school system occurs in reciprocal ways, with differing magnitudes of input and influence based on the constitution of the system and the nature of the school counseling intervention.

From an ASE perspective, intervention can occur at the individual level or at the systems level. However, a fully actualized version of the approach suggests that the corresponding intervention holds the greatest promise for ongoing and relevant development. The primary focus remains on the given student's experience; yet understood that each unique student is bound up in their own multiplicity of influences drawn from the surrounding school and other social systems. An ASE practitioner asserts that any individual or systemic vicissitude, even the

most seemingly diminutive or distant, can reverberate throughout the system in profound or subtle ways.

ASE is a radical perspective on education, suggesting that the end aspiration is a type of proto-liberation that paradoxically remains tied to the activating systems. In principle, ASE is a social justice approach to education in that the school counselor must always petition the social forces that affect students, educators, and their families. At all times, the development of a particular student, educator, or stakeholder coheres in step with the dynamic changes in the school and social ecologies. However, ASE is a distinct type of social justice practice, inspired by Freire (1970; 1973), in that it retains an appreciation of the humanistic spirit; that is, the individual, when rightly positioned, can rail against oppressive circumstances. The student is simultaneously a manifest of the system and yet not fully identical to that system; as such, education and any related school counseling intervention can capitalize on the capacity of the student or other school agent to transcend prior states and conditions, in turn affecting self and environment as interacting determinants.

Pertinence of School Counseling Theories

The American School Counseling Association (ASCA, n.d.) suggests that school counselors are trained to utilize "theories and evidence-based techniques that are effective in a school setting, including but not limited to rational emotive behavior therapy, reality therapy, cognitive-behavioral therapy, Adlerian, solution-focused brief counseling, person-centered counseling and family systems" (p. 1). While laudable in intent, it is curious given that less than .01% of the recent counseling literature reflects interventions delivered by school counselors, nonetheless the questionable nature of the empirical designs and limited findings tied to theory or discernable practice behaviors (Griffith et al., 2019). To be fair, generic findings from the

literature suggest that when school counselors perform direct services, the benefits abound for students and school systems alike (Whiston et al., 2011). While there are intuitive reasons to believe in the potential of school counselors and some nascent empirical evidence to support such claims, the pertinence of theory in these specific contexts remains dubious.

Each of the theories mentioned by ASCA (n.d.) are imported from community or clinical therapeutic contexts. Often psychological theories focus on the functioning and remediation of the single individual. While ASCA does provide space for emergent approaches, one must question the utility of any theory not necessarily explicitly intended for the K12 school context, nonetheless the specific roles and responsibilities of the professional who will embody that approach. In the case of school counseling, a theory must be able to inform practice in ways that are germane to students in classrooms; whole school communities; adult stakeholders as interactants with children in schools; academic, learning, personal, social, and career domains; and other factors that directly and indirectly affect the educational experience and beyond.

While psychological and other theoretical approaches certainly can be helpful guides for school counselors, it is unlikely that these theories can be throughgoing schemes for practice. As an alternative crafted specifically for the qualities implicit in school counseling, ASE offers practitioners and recipients a potentially more precise framework to inform practice, evaluate the intervention, and assess outcomes specific to K12 school systems.

Basic Position of ASE

The name Advocating Student-within-Environment, or ASE, was coined to highlight the primacy of advocacy. School counselors are affiliate to each person in a school and the encompassing school environment. Advocacy is the social justice imperative for all school counselors. Advocacy, as a noun, is a state of supporting a person or cause, especially when it

has been compromised. Advocating is a gerund. As a verb for ASE theory, advocating suggests the perpetual and developmental nature of advocacy.

Too often, advocacy is performed with superficial intentions or activities (Lemberger & Lemberger-Truelove, 2016). From an ASE perspective, advocating for students requires constant scrutiny of one's intentions and the means to advocate for student or systems wellness. For example, one must penetrate the causes and consequences related to how a school administrator reprimands a tardy student. What circumstances, personal characteristics, cultural influences, or training influenced the administrators word choice and behaviors? How does the response affect the child as a learner in the immediate or long term, or how does the response to one child affect the total composition of the class of students and their perceptions of class customs and mores? Advocacy is a deep and reflective commitment to sustainable positive development.

Systems must be challenged to create and sustain conditions that contribute to flourishing while embracing the inevitability of change and challenge. For example, scholars suggest that school counselors utilize ASE theory to confront the social determinants of mental health (SDMH) that compromise students or adults in schools (Johnson et al., in press). SDMH includes economic circumstances, physical environment, neighborhood cohesiveness, and healthy food options that influence people's mental functioning and outcomes. Improving the SDHM for students requires the school counselor to work directly with the student to capitalize on resources and confront challenges while advocating for more just student and community opportunities at the systems levels. These advocacy behaviors do not suggest that the school counselor pursue a fixed outcome, arbitrated by one person or even ethos; instead, there is a

perennial community process of learning, questioning, and acting to dynamic systems in people and total school climates.

The epistemological claim of student-within-environment follows the prime objective of creating more just, equitable, and contributory school environments. This manner of phrasing highlights the embeddedness of each student in a school and other societal contexts. The student as a learner. The student as a classmate. The student as an expression of cultural influences. Student as an athlete, artist, and myriad other identities. The identities and activities commingle together and affect the contemporary experience and future aspirations. This stance highlights the reflexivity between the positionality of the student and the larger encompassing school environment; the hyphenated word *within* reminds the school counselor that any intervention must approach the student and school as mutual influencers.

There is a misperception that humans are compos mentis, that is, having complete control over one's mind and agency. Our intuitions suggest we are making contemporaneous decisions. But it is impossible to discern if we are making volitional decisions or merely observing the outcome of responses to a dense latticework of prior conditions of experience. Certainly, each person always contributes personally and socially, but the inevitable situatedness of the self in the environment suggests that learning, decision-making, and action are composite to prior biological, psychological, narrative, and social causes. Even the student in kindergarten, who appears to run from tire swing impulsively and indiscriminately to jungle gym and then skipping over to peers is influenced by a line of inconceivable prior forces that led to that moment, guided those behaviors, and resulted in one's felt experience. As a 5-year-old (or 95-year-old), and every day before and after, we are at least in part an embodiment of various governing systems.

But the student is not completely emptied of the capacity to influence oneself or one's circumstance. The kindergartener, the prepubescent middle schooler, and the senior approaching graduation are each active agents that can have some determining influence on one's plight, even if one is always tied up in their guiding systems. In the source writings related to ASE theory (Lemberger, 2010; Lemberger & Hutchison, 2014), the concepts of contributory and detracting governors were introduced to describe social forces that cooccur with the student in schools. In the contemporary literature, one-half of the governing equation has adopted a related term, social determinants of mental health (Allen et al., 2014), an offshoot of an earlier term, the social determinants of health. Whereas the SDMH are an attempt to define and describe antecedent influences of psychological functioning, the term governor is retained in ASE theory to depict the collaborative nature of the student-within-environment. Additionally, governors highlight the non-normative and sophisticated manner in that prior influences can be helpful or harmful and evolve in function and influence over time; "contributory governors (assets) within the school environment, identify and conceptualize detracting governors (impediments), and intervene in concert toward the student generated desired outcome" (Lemberger & Hutchison, 2014, p. 32).

This distinction is important in a school counseling context, as school counseling must retain the essence of professional counseling, which is different from the other allied helping professions that tend to be concerned with a psychological self or fully socially consequential being. Professional counselors are distinguished by our identity, which is chiefly concerned with prevention, development, wellness, and social justice (Myers, 1992). School counselors are not positioned to remedy personal maladies, but rather our focus is chiefly on creating opportunities for the student to thrive in personally and socially germane ways over long durations of time.

Considering the types of counseling behaviors typical of school counselors, that is direct instruction in classrooms (typically psychoeducational in nature), small groups of students in and outside of classrooms, individual counseling sessions, and consultation with teachers, it is reasonable that theory must cohere with the idea that counseling is additive as an interacting determinant in the student and school system. Stated more simply, school counseling is not simply inspiring insights; counseling binds to experience to govern new possibilities and likelihoods.

The highest aspiration of ASE can be found in the concept of sapience, "or wisdom as expressed through critical consciousness is an outcome status inbuilt with the cognitive, affective, and behavioral complexity for the student to anticipate and respond to oppressive environments, even after such environments evolve" (Lemberger & Hutchison, 2014, p. 37). In developmentally different ways dependent on the schooling level and cultural conditions for the student, sapience, as conceptually consistent with critical consciousness (Freire, 1973), is required so that the student has the agency to transcend or liberate from the oppressive or limiting social structures.

ASE poses an epistemological challenge to approaches primarily concerned with the student as a largely autonomous self or the student as a passive recipient of school and societal influences. But more than a conceptual framework, ASE informs school counseling praxis in specific ways. The basic assumption is that formal schooling structures are intended to activate and support students' inner capacities and aid their development. They might have more opportunities throughout life in and beyond the school environment. Therefore, school counselors aim to cultivate students' capacities while succoring people, phenomena, and qualities

in the school environment so that student capacities might flourish. As stated otherwise, ASE is about creating personal and social conditions for opportunity.

Rather than focusing on circumstantial events or specific personal expressions, from an ASE perspective, the primary focus of intervention is on capacities that are generalizable to myriad outcomes. For example, cultivating students' executive functioning, which is the antecedent to goal-focused action, is relevant to learning, achievement, social skills, and multiple other life experiences (Jacob & Parkinson, 2015). As such, the practice focus for ASE differentiates itself from related approaches given the centrality of interactional causality in intervening with students-within-environments.

The theory of development implicit to ASE theory is patently consistent with the design of education, therefore, a unique fit for counseling services rendered in school environments. Like the assumptions of Bayesian analyses, the likelihood of something occurring in the future is predicated on the prior knowledge of a probabilistic event (Ghosh et al., 2007). Education draws from various cultural artifacts or information, whether from the natural or social sciences, to perpetuate advances into the future. In this manner, ASE suggests that school counseling includes the various processes to sharpen the capacities of the individual (e.g., a particular student, one or more educators, family members, or relevant community members) while simultaneously curating the most hospitable social conditions, and then linking these prior conditions for the student and dynamics in the school environment.

Whether academic content, social experiences, or career aspirations, school counselors must collaborate with students such that historical influences can culminate into more desirable and intentional ends. As a theory, ASE is concerned with the confluence of causal influencers and experiential governors. It is like a kaleidoscope where the capacities of the individual student

are likened to one or a series of colors and filtered through the colors that represent the various aspects of the school environment. The interaction between the self and the environment reflects both originating colors in the kaleidoscope, but as the various colored crystals come together, they are a bit different. As a practice of counseling, the school counselor is like the fingers that grasp the kaleidoscope and work with the student to expose the various colored opportunities, especially as attractive to the student's perspective.

ASE school counseling focuses on student (and school system) outcomes but is not necessarily a primary driver in discerning how to support. Rather, the concern taps down on how the school counselor can engender capacities in the student that are iterative and flexible while also cultivating school conditions that propel continuous reflection and growth. As Vygotsky (1978) wisely offered:

> The search for a method becomes one of the most important problems of the entire enterprise of understanding the uniquely human forms of psychological activity. In this case, the method is simultaneously prerequisite and product, the tool and the result of the study. (p.65)

For school counseling, this suggests that the practice is the outcome, as is the inverse. A school counselor provides the student and environment with the prior conditions to experience the desired outcomes and helps induce that experience to be general and flexible.

Orientation and Practice Foci for ASE School Counseling

At its core, ASE is a theory to support learning. School counselors support student learning, including academic learning, personal or social learning, or even learning pertaining to career development (ASCA, 2019). School counselors also support adults and other community partners in learning how to interface with students as learners or as relational beings. Learning

includes various profoundly complex personal and social processes (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020). School counselors can collaborate with students and representatives of the school environment to augment and amplify mutually beneficial learning that crosses learning, social, and vocational domains.

ASE theory contains specific orientations and practice foci intended to support students and aspects of the school environment. Collectively titled the "5 Cs of ASE theory", these include curiosity, connectedness, co-regulation, compassion, and contribution. As orientations to experience, the five Cs represent the qualities aimed at sapience in students, educators, and even the school counselor. This orientation harkens to the suggestion proffered by Vygotsky that the method (of being or orientation) is the outcome. As practices, the 5 Cs of ASE provide the school counselor with a framework that can inspire theoretically unique counseling practices or overlays to guide general practices in an ASE motif.

(insert Figure 2.1 here)

Curiosity

The condition of curiosity is universally familiar to most people and yet a precise and shared definition is elusive or varied. Kidd and Hayden (2015) posited that curiosity is a "drive state for information" (p. 450). William James famously suggested that curiosity

> "is perhaps a rather poor term by which to designate the *impulse toward better cognition* in its full extent… In its higher, more intellectual form, the impulse toward completer knowledge takes the character of scientific or philosophic curiosity. … Young children are possessed by curiosity about every new impression that assails them." (James, 1899, p. 45 – 46).

There is a teleological dimension to curiosity, wherefrom the curious seeker strives towards some conceptual or experiential resolve or end. Curiosity can also be sustainable through persistent inquiry and openness (Abdelghani et al., 2022). But curiosity also suggests emergence from a nescience state of being. To be curious is paradoxical in that one has some impression about a target and maintains an open and incomplete inquisitiveness about that target or its related aspects.

From an ASE perspective, curiosity is central as a personal quality and a counseling process. As a personal quality, school counselors who embody curiosity are more likely to establish a helpful rapport with the student or educator, and by extension, such rapport contributes to desirable counseling outcomes (Elliot et al., 2018). For student or educator recipients of counseling, a curious state operates as the receptivity to personal and social exploration in counseling and the grounds for ongoing development. As the school environment level, curiosity is the humility necessary to apprehend the uniqueness of the particular student or educator. Considered together, curiosity as a state in schools includes qualities such as openness, reflexivity, tenacity, humility, inquisitiveness, flexibility, emotional dexterity, and many other attributes necessary in affiliating prior states with emergent states of being.

There are certainly developmental differences in how children and adults experience and express curiosity (Beiser, 1984). From an ASE perspective, one is not required to believe or even comprehend another person's state of curiosity but one is required to believe that that person experiences it. Therefrom, the process of curiosity emerges from the various states of curiosity. A school counselor is meta-curious or curious about the curiosity of others. These efforts can amplify and validate the curiosity of the student or educator while also initiating the rapport necessary for effective counseling in a school environment.

Just as there are developmental differences in the experience and expression of curiosity, there can be cultural differences (Dyche & Zayas, 1995). While it is not necessarily the student's or educator's responsibility to satisfy the cultural curiosities of the school counselor, processes such as cultural broaching (see Day-Vines et al., 2021) can be a valuable way to learn how one is various identity structures affects experience in and outside of counseling.

Invoking curiosity in a school counseling session can be accomplished in various ways, not limited to the nature of the in-session activity or even the expression of curious language. Activities that encourage curiosity include prompts to challenge students to consider what influences decision-making processes. Additionally, minimally curious language might be something such as, "What did you accomplish?" whereas "How did you experience your accomplishments?" or "What contributed to your feelings of accomplishment?" In both examples, you can receive specific information about the accomplishment, but only in the latter two does the prompt encourage elaboration beyond an isolated or normative outcome.

From an ASE perspective, curiosity is a necessary state and process that must be accomplished at the student and school environment levels. For curiosity to be personally relevant and environmentally sustainable, a persistent commitment to curiosity must be tended. Curiosity is a brilliant yet challenging orientation to experience; the great dream psychologist Carl Jung (1964) once offered a helpful prescription for curiosity when he described how he analyzes dreams:

> It is for this reason that I have always said to my pupils: "Learn as much as you can about symbolism; then forget it all when you are analyzing a dream." This advice is of such practical importance that I have made it a rule to remind myself that I can never understand somebody else's dream well enough to interpret it correctly. I have done this

> in order to check the flow of my own associations and reactions, which might otherwise prevail over my patient's uncertainties and hesitations. (p. 42)

There is a novelty in each moment and each opportunity for development. This brand of curiosity is its own process and outcome for the ASE-inspired school counselor.

Connectedness

To be curious about something or someone, there must be some affiliation to that thing or person; the conceptual location for that curiosity is the experience of connectedness. From an ASE perspective, connectedness is the experience of acceptance, safety, encouragement, and respect shared between students, school counselors, educators, or other school-related persons (Osterman, 2000; Resnick et al., 1997). Given the systems nature of ASE, the concept of connectedness demonstrates the interrelatedness of experience with all school participants. Certainly, each person has a unique first-person perspective. That idiosyncrasy colors the kaleidoscopic experience in novel and emergent ways, yet the connections between people as the prior determinants of experience are ubiquitous.

Connectedness as a state of being can assist the school counselor in making tentative assessments about the student or school environment. Copacetic connections generally reflect a coherence between the student and the prompting environment. For academic content, connections represent the possible coherence of the content. Socially, when one is generally bonded to a certain peer group or cause. Alternatively, when one experiences disconnection, one can experience threats, uncertainty, and disengagement.

Just as ruptured or threatened connections can be problematic, overly entangled connections can potentially limit functioning. Returning to the kaleidoscope metaphor, if the student must conform to a certain way of being (i.e., a certain color in the prism), this potentially

forecloses the profound diversity of experience feasible within each person, across time and potential experiences with others. This type of enmeshment is the antithesis of education, as it is a delimiting governor that stifles the student or the school environment.

A school counselor who utilizes connectedness in their work will toil to find and accentuate relatedness between the student and school environment. There is a delicate balance in connectedness practices, as one does not want to inadvertently promote coercion or conformity. This is especially important given the authority of one's role as a school counselor. Similarly, one must account for one's cultural capital in connectedness praxis, for the goal of ASE work is student sapience and critical consciousness, not merely assimilating into the school environment (which has assimilated from larger socio-cultural systems). Instead, connectedness is adopting an orientation that is both aware of one's thrownness into a system and maintaining the wherewithal not to be fully consumed by that system.

For the particular student, connectedness in counseling should be validating and challenging. We validate that the lived experience is phenomenologically coherent and, yet, simply because that experience is valid, it does not preclude that there are other experiences or connections. In this way, connectedness is related to concepts such as empathy and yet is conceptually different. Like empathy, through connection, we bridge perspectives, and yet, it is different from empathy in that there is not the baggage of a single first-person experience.

This is an important distinction, especially for working with children and adolescents. For example, because connectedness talk does not essentialize the person or experience, the school counselor can differentiate a behavior from an absolute person or way of being. For example, a student can misunderstand a concept and retain the capacity to understand other concepts or later grasp the misconceived concept.

Co-regulation

In ASE theory, co-regulation is the fulcrum between the student and the school environment. McCaslin (2009) defined co-regulation as the interface of two or more self-aware, intentional individuals who draw from various cultural, social, and personal sources to inform and influence behavior. Experientially, the student cannot be reduced to self but rather an agent with various systems. How one regulates one's experiences and aspirations in those systems requires one to co-regulate. Imagine a rock being thrown into a river. The rock is predisposed by its gravity and form to pursue the riverbed, yet the current alters that tragedy based on the magnitude of the current. Students are certainly goal-directed, yet even the most volitionally able student responds to the learning and social opportunities, including opportunities that are either knowable or unknown.

As an orientation for experience, a self-regulated individual can monitor, predict, shift, and direct one's internal and external experiences (Schunk & Zimmerman, 1994), whereas operating out of a co-regulated orientation, one extends beyond one's inner psychological experiences and places total experience in a broader social and historical context. For the school counselor, a co-regulated perspective can help extend connectedness across peoples and contexts. For example, it is cliché to dismiss student behavior to tropes such as, "they are that way because of their parents." In contrast, a co-regulated perspective understands that across the generations, there are various personal and social causes and consequences. Those parents will not spontaneously develop parenting skills simply because they are procreated. Co-regulation as an orientation reminds the school counselor that there are myriad determinants of experience in all the various players in the school system.

As an orientation for students and members of the school environment, co-regulation is the emotional, cognitive, and behavioral capacity to respond in a way that is personally and socially relevant. Even at very young ages, children can often discern how certain conditions affect their experiences. From an ASE perspective, co-regulation is not necessarily an end in itself. Rather, the process of co-regulating one's orientation within larger systems is a process that stokes a co-regulated end that is more connected and contributory to students and members of the school environment alike.

This generative way of considering co-regulation can inspire school counseling approaches and behaviors. For example, consider the differences between the following two statements with similar intent: "What have you done to improve yourself?" is different than "How have you pursued your goals given the influences of (insert circumstance)?" In the former, the school counselor has inadvertently essentialized a single experience or interpretation; moreover, this form of question coerces the student to acknowledge improvement when maybe that does not cohere with the student's experience. In the case of the latter, with only a few more words, the student is encouraged to consider multiple possibilities, as each exists within their influencing context.

Just as co-regulation binds together the experiences and pursuit of the student and the aspects of the school environment, as a concept within ASE theory, it also binds together the 5Cs. The curiosity required of the student must be co-regulated with curiosities found in the school environment. In the same way, connectedness requires feelings of safety, affiliation, and rapport to be co-regulated and distributed. Finally, co-regulation anticipates the final two Cs, which are primarily expressions of curiosity and connectedness.

Compassion

Being curious, connected, and co-regulated can exhaust the cognitive load on students and members of the school community. Compassion is the orientation and practice of personal and social acceptance with discernment. This form of acceptance does not suggest that agents in a school affirm and internalize deleterious experiences of social conditions; instead, compassion suggests that to endure the complexity of being a complex self who is tethered to various competing systems, discerning prior causes and effects of experience in a benevolent and focused way can protect one's wellbeing and better position oneself for future personal and social development.

"*Com*-" as a prefix means together or with, as in student-within-environment. Passion is understood as the intense or enthused desire for or state of something. From an ASE perspective, compassion is being with the desire of the student or member of the school environment. This is a co-regulated process shared between the school counselor, student, and relevant parties in the school.

For the student, a compassionate orientation validates their various experiences as a social being. Although adults might romantically reminisce about childhood, each stage of one's youth can be littered with challenges of various sorts (Erikson, 1950). Compassion acknowledges the vigor necessary to pass through these stages while affirming that all personal or social pursuits are imprecise, context-specific, and emergent. The orientation of compassion is illustrated in the counselor statement suggested by Brigman and Webb (2010), *Don't doubt your ability, try another strategy*.

Compassion suggests that all expressions are reasonable within context, yet it is shortsighted to essentialize any one or more expressions. A week before writing this chapter, my daughter (Matthew) asked me when she was walking to school, "Daddy, is it okay to be

afraid of things?" To which I responded, "Certainly. Fear can be a great gift, even if it seems temporarily inconvenient and scary. It is your body letting you know that there is a potential threat out there and you should be attentive. What is not necessarily okay is to be stuck in our fear and only experience things in one way, especially long after the threat is mostly gone." Herein I tried to invoke compassion by validating her genuine experience of fear and yet also appreciate that she is complex and her circumstances will evolve over time.

A second anecdote to illustrate compassion comes from my experiences as a professor. I once had a colleague who struggled with mental well-being, culminating in misperceptions and literal hallucinations. Unfortunately, his status was so compromised that it impaired his work as a professor, and he stopped all professional activities. After a while, I was asked by representatives in the university about the college and some of the circumstances that afflicted him (e.g., workplace stress, harassment from colleagues). The perspective I offered was simply this, "I don't necessarily believe what my colleague believes, but I believe that my colleague believes these things." Compassion requires one to acknowledge that almost any perspective is experientially true, but there are also many influencing truths and interpretations for any one or more truths. Compassion is being with the passion for the person to experience self-within-environment, while being with the passion required for the self to continue to pursue new vistas of self and environment.

The practice of compassion requires that the school counselor embody and express the first three Cs (curiosity, connectedness, and co-regulation) and couple those with the acceptance and discernment of compassion. This process can be accomplished by utilizing an adapted version of Rapoport's Rules (popularized by philosopher Daniel Dennett [2013]):

Figure 2

	Rapoport's Rules	ASE
1.	You should attempt to re-express your target's position so clearly, vividly, and fairly that your target says, "Thanks, I wish I'd thought of putting it that way.	
2.	You should list any points of agreement (especially if they are not matters of general or widespread agreement).	
3.	You should mention anything you have learned from your target.	
4.		
5.	Only then are you permitted to say so much as a word of rebuttal or criticism.	Expand position to multiple alternative explanations (influences) and/or outcomes.

Compassion is a high order skill in ASE theory and should be pursued cautiously. Compassion can come off as supercilious. ASE is a social justice and personal liberation approach to school counseling; therefore, compassion is not some covert process to pacify the student or educator or exonerate unjust school environments. Instead, compassion is the orientation and practice of discerning the determinants of experience, conceiving of their various effects, and ascertaining composure such that one can continue to regulate the self and environment to new and benefiting ends.

Contribution

The first 4 Cs of ASE generally co-occur in the counseling process, yet the final C is necessary to fully actualize ASE. Contribution is the co-regulated efforts to change social systems and personal commitments to social advocacy. Contribution operates as a proto–Archimedean Point or ultimate ethic for the theory. Unlike many ethical positions, contribution is more than a concept; instead, it is a living value that must be committed to through action.

Given the incredible complexity of school and other social systems, logical contribution follows the maturation of the 4 initial Cs. This said it is conceivable that the mere act of

participating in the type of social advocacy to vivify contribution, experiences of curiosity, connectedness, co-regulation, and compassion might manifest. For example, a school counselor might work with a teacher to elucidate how district disciplinary policies overrepresent certain populations of students. In pursuing more restorative practices, the school counselor and teacher might have new understandings for students (curiosity), connect with these students' behaviors within systems, and co-regulate new classroom climates.

Contribution reflects Freire's (1974) belief in mutual liberation of the oppressed and oppressor; there is a total commitment to solidarity and prosperity at the personal and social levels. Consistent with the other 4 Cs in ASE theory, contribution is not a simple or always apparent course. Oftentimes, contribution must be scrutinized or run the risk of creating new hegemonies in the place of prior oppressive forces in the school system. For example, in efforts to create greater access to one group, educators must be attentive to implications for other oppressed students in the system.

> In practice, this recognition requires the humanistic practitioner to amplify the voices and agency of the oppressed, rather than simply serving as a proxy on their behalf. Certainly there are occasions when it is reasonable to use the social positionality of the practitioner or even oppressor to support the justice needs of the oppressed, but one's power is not an absolute and it should be allocated as soon as is possible. Social justice advocacy is not an end onto itself; rather, a goal of social justice praxis is to amplify the agency of the oppressed in such a manner that they are better able to self-advocate and confront injustices. (Lemberger & Lemberger-Truelove, 2016, p. 576)

ASE is not a theory that is sans ethical presuppositions. ASE is a dialogical approach, oscillating between the interests in the student and the social environment as interacting

determinants of experience. Therefore, any just action in the school must be deemed ethical at the individual and systems level. This is not to be confused with consensus building, as that ethical approach tends to tilt in the direction of the most powerful agent or stagnates through assimilation within the system.

This ethical stance in a school can be incredibly complex and stifling, yet it is not a reason for inaction. Participants in schools are always contributing. The dialogical nature of pursuing personally and socially just behaviors, therefore, suggests that curiosity, connectedness, co-regulation, and compassion must repeatedly filter any action on behalf of the student or school environment.

The Counseling Relationship

Penetrating through the middle of the 5 Cs of ASE theory is its adherence to the common factors of counseling literature (Wampold, 2015). This literature suggests that a particular theory only accounts for a small amount of client development. Instead, factors external to the counseling process largely dictate client outcomes; from an ASE perspective, this point endorses the role of the school counselor as social justice advocate. Within the counseling relationship, common factors are certain qualities that contribute to desirable outcomes across theoretical orientations.

In a counterintuitive way, the common factors literature supports the uniqueness of ASE theory. One of the primary predictors of counselor influenced outcomes pertains to the cultural fitness of the intervention. As such, it is reasonable that the most appropriate approach to working with students, educators, and other stakeholders in schools is through the application of an approach tailored to the culture of schools, the developmental and functional needs of students, and the roles and responsibilities endemic to school counselors.

More than a tacit endorsement of ASE, the common factors literature explicitly highlights the importance of rapport as a healing ingredient (Wampold, 2015). The 5 Cs of ASE are the mechanism proscribed to establish mutual respect and to engender hopefulness in the client, which prove to be vital ingredients in counseling rapport.

Concluding Thoughts

School counselors operate in complex school systems. At their disposal includes various delivery systems to help support students and other parties, including classroom guidance and psychoeducational activities, small group counseling, individual counseling, coordination and collaboration, and consultation. Filtered through an ASE framework, each of these counseling formats can potentially support students and elements of the school environment as interdependent governors of experience.

The ASE perspective can appear almost paradoxical. On the one hand, an ASE practitioner is required to act with (or within) a student's perspective. This suggests a deep respect for the current functioning of the client. If there are any maladies, those are honored as components of one's experience. On the other hand, to be with the student as a counselor suggests, one must ameliorate the experiences of the student and the school environment.

There is a resolution. Unlike allied theoretical approaches that suggest a change in perspective or encourage the student to renarrative one's constructed messages, the ASE approach is primarily concerned with creating the personal and social conditions as preventative positions pointing towards ongoing development. Stated more simply, school counseling reflects the acme of education, that is pulling from one's history and compelling the self to be an active participant in that unfolding history. As one's capacities are sharpened in the various counseling

experiences and as social circumstances in the school are made more equitable and usable, the self within systems emerge in more intended and prosperous ends.

It still feels like a volitional choice directed by the student. The causal conditions of choice were established in the student as an indivisible system and the school as another aspect of myriad systems. There is a type of epistemological compatibilism in this resolve in that each student can affect one's destiny as it unfolds, but only insofar as those actions were enacted prior to their occurrence in the school. The student's acumen as a reader and their exposure to empowering contexts contributes to one's moral compass. How one engages in peer communication coupled with the peers in one's social groups affects what notes are or are not passed in geometry class.

The school counselor stands alongside each student and the total school environment. Like all other governors in the kaleidoscope that is the school environment, the school counselor's own orientation and practices contribute to future possibilities. The spirit of ASE can be best summarized in the following two quotes:

> "To best prepare young children in poverty for later life challenges, professional counselors must make every attempt to improve social conditions; however, it is equally important that young children's internal capacities be strengthened either to accommodate improved social conditions or to maximize resilience in the face of persistent adversity" (Lemberger-Truelove et al., 2018, p. 299).

and

> "students from disenfranchised communities do not accept inadequate or deleterious social conditions; instead, using… strategies, they accept their cognitive and affective

reactions and respond with clearer intentionality." (Lemberger-Truelove et al., 2018, p. 299)

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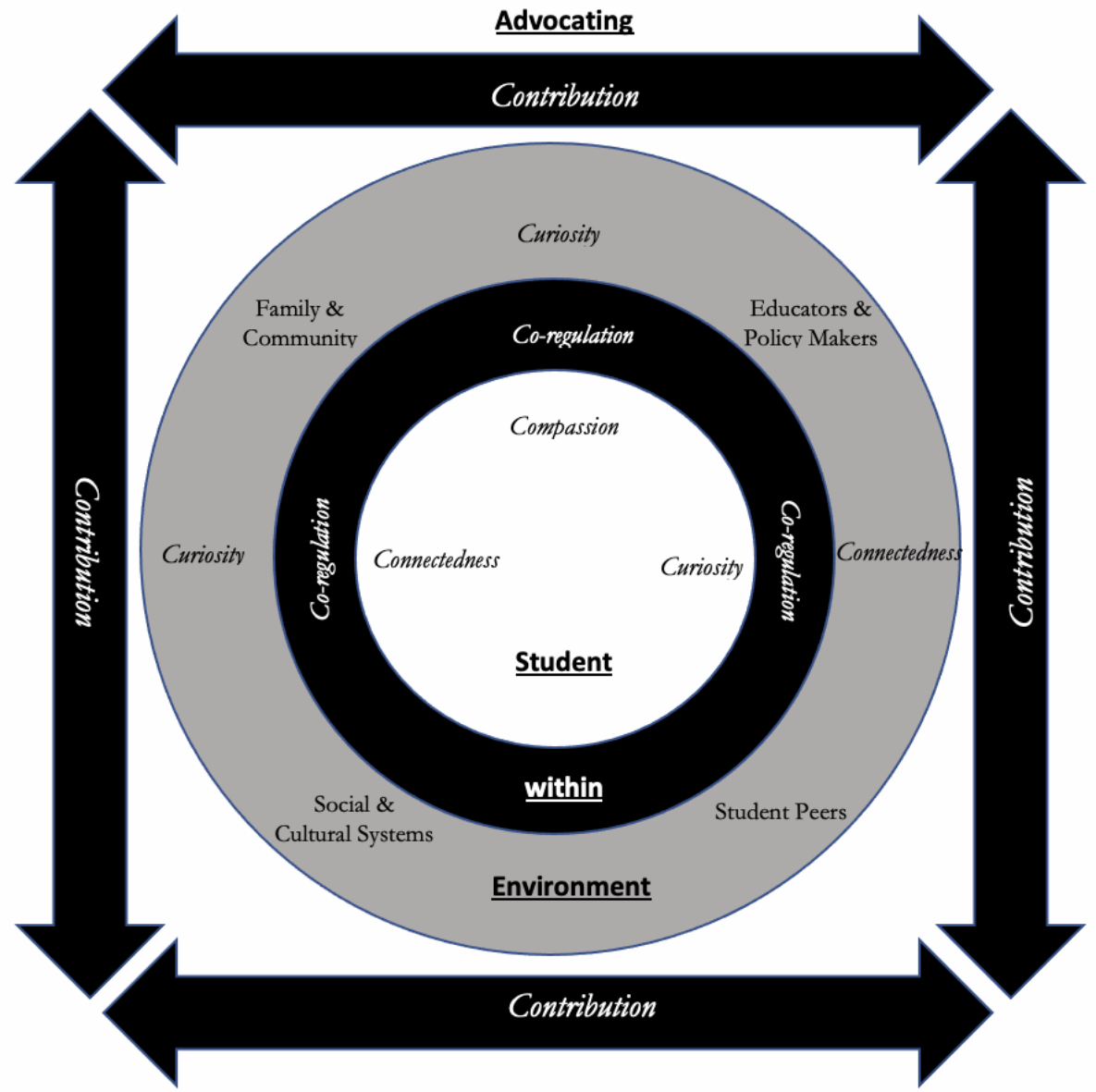
Figure 2.1

Advocating Student-within-Environment Theory Map



Note: From Lemberger-Truelove, Molina, Carbonneau, & Smith, (in press)