

# ***Diversity and Invitational Theory and Practice***

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In their self-concept approach to counseling, Purkey and Schmidt (1996) introduced the tenets and assumptions of *invitational education* (Purkey & Novak, 1996) and applied them to professional helping relationships. Although their model is a general approach to helping and not specific to counseling culturally diverse clients, many of its components are similar to other counseling approaches presented in the multicultural literature (Schmidt, in press). At the same time, principles put forth by Purkey and Schmidt (1996) are relevant to the broader application of invitational education practices with diverse populations. This article revisits some of the basic concepts and constructs presented by invitational theory and practice, and relates them to issues of diversity. Specifically, it examines constructs and processes espoused by invitational theory in the context of establishing helpful relationships with people from diverse cultural backgrounds.

## **Assumptions and Basic Constructs of Invitational Theory**

As an integrated approach, invitational theory embraces a broad perspective of the educational, health care, counseling, and other services that help people meet the diverse challenges of today's world. At the same time, it encourages caring professionals to move beyond alleviation of immediate concerns towards an exploration of relatively boundless potential for future human development (Purkey & Schmidt, 1996).

Founded on the assumptions of perceptual psychology and self-concept theory, invitational theory acknowledges the

power of human perception and its impact on self-development. Furthermore, it advocates for educational programs and services that incorporate beneficial human relationships, improved physical environments, and respectful systems in which all people, regardless of culture, ethnicity, sex, gender, or other diversity factor can thrive. Professionals who apply the principles of invitational theory and practice adhere to four fundamental beliefs:

1. Every person wants to be accepted and affirmed as valuable, capable, and responsible, and wants to be treated accordingly.
2. Every person has the power to create beneficial messages for themselves and others, and because they have this power, they have the responsibility.
3. Every person possesses relatively untapped potential in all areas of learning and human development.
4. Human potential is best realized by creating places, programs, policies, and processes intentionally designed to invite optimal development and encourage people to realize this potential in themselves and others (Purkey & Novak, 1996).

In addition, the invitational approach identifies four continuous levels of functioning across a spectrum of helpful and harmful behaviors, which encompass an infinite range of purposeful and accidental actions called intentional and unintentional behaviors. The four levels of functioning are presented here with brief comments about diversity issues:

- I. Intentionally Disinviting. People who behave in purposefully hurtful and harmful ways—towards either themselves or other people—function at the lowest desirable level. When people are intentionally disinviting, they intend to demean, degrade, and destroy the value and worth of themselves and/or others. Racism, sexism, homophobia, religious intolerance, and other op-

pressive beliefs, when intentionally acted upon, demonstrate this level of functioning.

- II. Unintentionally Disinviting. Sometimes hurtful and harmful messages happen although people do not intend them. When behaviors are ill timed, careless, misguided, or exaggerated, they might be misinterpreted by others, particularly people of diverse backgrounds. Actions based on misconceptions of cultural differences and stereotypic views of diverse characteristics fall into this category. Although the harm that results from such behavior might be unintended, the damage is nonetheless hurtful, counter-productive, and sometimes irreparable.
- III. Unintentionally Inviting. Occasionally people observe positive results from their actions, even when they are uncertain what they did to achieve such outcomes. For instance, school counselors who begin helping relationships without establishing an understanding of the student's worldview and purpose for seeking assistance, likely will be unsure about where the relationship is going or unaware of what they are doing. However, because these counselors have good intentions, their relationships might prove beneficial to a wide range of students. One danger of functioning at this level is that a lack of knowing what one is doing makes it uncertain, and perhaps unlikely, that consistently effective relationships will be achieved. Such lack of consistency may prevent counselors, educators, nurses, and other professionals from repeating successful relationships with culturally diverse students, clients, and patients.
- IV. Intentionally Inviting. Consistently successful professionals aim for the highest level of functioning with all their clients. They dependably demonstrate command of appropriate skills while remaining sensitive to cul-

tural contexts. They maintain a broad knowledge base and demonstrate unconditional regard for themselves and others. In schools for example, teachers, administrators, and counselors who function at a high level of professional practice consistently create intentional messages that enable diverse populations to feel accepted, valued, and worthwhile. These beneficial messages encourage optimal human development that helps people of diverse backgrounds to construct healthy self-views and correspondingly beneficial worldviews.

In addition to the four levels of functioning, invitational theory identifies five factors that contribute to, or detract from, human development. These five factors are people, places, policies, programs, and processes, and individually and combined, they function at one or more of the levels described above. We might readily understand that people behave at different levels of functioning, but it is less obvious how the other four factors send positive or negative messages that influence human development and relationships. A few examples help to illustrate the effects of these messages:

*Policies* that emphasize punitive approaches, such as school regulations that fail students according to some arbitrary cut-off score on state-mandated tests, do little to invite all students to the celebration of learning. Rather, they ignore the significance of cultural diversity and collective worldviews. They adhere to a misguided belief that everyone should be treated “the same,” disregarding individual and collective differences.

*Places* that demonstrate disrespect by being unsanitary, unsafe, or inaccessible dissuade and discourage people in deceptive, yet powerful ways. At the same time, places that reflect only the dominant culture without recognizing the presence of diverse populations practice exclusion rather than inclusion in daily life.

*Programs that neglect or ignore cultural or individual differences, or processes adopted for the convenience of an elite few, may disinvite people who feel slighted or set apart from the rest of the population. For example, schools that offer English Language Learner (ELL) programs because of a growing Hispanic/Latino population without also offering Spanish lessons to students of the dominant culture, convey the message that the dominant language is preferred and more highly regarded than Spanish.*

Invitational theory embraces beliefs and practices that are compatible with multicultural approaches and philosophies (Schmidt, in press). Purkey and Schmidt (1996) listed four elements of compatibility: (1) an acceptance of a perceptual orientation to understanding human behavior (i.e., a combined self-view and worldview), (2) an emphasis on self-concept as a dynamic force in human development, (3) an unwavering respect for human respect and dignity, and (4) the encouragement of wide applicability (i.e., advocacy and social justice). As a belief system and guide for professional practice, invitational theory can be integrated with compatible approaches in working with diverse populations.

The study and application of invitational theory and practice, called *invitational education*, relies on understandable language to describe complex human relationships (Purkey & Novak, 1996). For this reason, the concepts of *inviting* and *disinviting*, and intentionality and unintentionality (Schmidt, 2002), are teachable to diverse clients at all developmental levels. With students and clients who speak languages different from the professional, a first step might be to ask them to substitute suitable and meaningful terms for invitational concepts from their native language.

People can learn the concepts of invitational functioning and use this knowledge to assess their own development and re-

relationships with others. As they comprehend personal, social, and cultural concerns from an invitational perspective, people are able to distinguish external causes from internal perceptions, understand related responsibilities, and choose behaviors to address challenging situations and concerns. By teaching invitational levels of functioning within a cultural context, professionals empower diverse students, clients, and patients to make appropriate decisions giving positive direction to their lives. To do so on a consistent basis, professionals want to understand other aspects of invitational theory that are related to processes of establishing beneficial relationships. These aspects include choices and styles of interacting as well as the stages of creating inviting messages (Purkey & Schmidt, 1996).

## **Choices**

Invitational practice proposes four choices that exist among human interactions and the messages that comprise them: (a) sending, (b) not sending, (c) accepting, and (d) not accepting. These choices influence every human relationship. The first two are in the domain of the person who creates the initial message to begin an interaction or relationship.

Sending. An invitation does not exist until it becomes a purposeful action. Simply thinking about doing good things is insufficient. To establish effective and beneficial relationships requires substantive action. For example, “to respect is to *act* respectfully, to trust is to *act* trustfully, to care is to *act* caringly, and to love is to *act* lovingly” (Purkey & Schmidt, 1996, p. 15; accentuation by author). Invitational practices require that helping professionals act on their good intentions.

Not sending. Sometimes, people do not accomplish intended goals because they lack planning or they exhibit poor timing. Occasionally, intentional professionals understand that it is best *not* to take a specific action. In these instances, timing is essential to invitational practice, especially when working

with diverse populations. Appreciating the times to remain silent, for example, may be more important than what a professional decides to say during an interaction with a client (Purkey & Schmidt, 1996).

Accepting. The receiver of a message controls the remaining two choices. The first is whether to accept a message and act on it. By accepting an inviting message, a receiver agrees to the interaction. Furthermore, by accepting a message, a person exhibits trust in the sender, indicating a belief that the intended relationship will be beneficial rather than harmful. Acceptance by a receiver indicates to the sender a willingness to engage in a trusting relationship. For example, when an employee accepts a supervisor's invitation to receive assistance with a project, the employee does so with the understanding that the supervisor will be respectful and protective of the employee to avoid embarrassment or other negative repercussion.

Not accepting. Whether or not a particular message is acceptable or unacceptable always remains in the domain of the receiver. Perception plays a significant role in this process. Culturally diverse people will draw different conclusions about the same messages. This is particularly important to understand when working with clients from diverse cultures. Sometimes, what we view as seemingly beneficial messages, other people from diverse backgrounds might perceive as inappropriate, untrustworthy, or uncaring behaviors simply because we overlook or ignore cultural nuances. When people reject seemingly helpful messages, helping professionals might consider the components of invitational theory to explore alternative messages that are more acceptable. At the same time, when working with diverse populations, they acknowledge that people might need time to consider unfamiliar surroundings, customs, and traditions before making a commitment to a new relationship, particularly ones that might encourage them to rethink some of their cultural beliefs.

In addition to the four choices involved in deciding to send or not send, accept or not accept messages, invitational theory also suggests that people select different styles of functioning. Understanding these styles of functioning can be useful to professional helpers who want to maximize their working relationships with people of different cultural backgrounds.

## **Styles**

According to Purkey & Schmidt (1996), the four styles are: (a) invisibly inappropriate, (b) visibly inappropriate, (c) visibly appropriate, and (d) invisibly appropriate. The following paragraphs explain each style and its implications when working with diverse populations.

Invisibly inappropriate. Sometimes, people form relationships that feel uncomfortable and inappropriate even though all apparent intentions seem worthwhile. For example, when being introduced to a new acquaintance, certain behaviors might cause discomfort during the initial interaction. How the person looks at you or gazes off, certain facial gestures, and other behaviors might give you a sense of disconnection or rejection. In counseling relationships, Purkey and Schmidt (1996) noted, "Although such differences are hard to describe, experienced counselors are keenly aware of them. They sense that something in the counseling relationship is not right, although they would have difficulty explaining what that 'something' is" (p. 17). In all types of relationships, particularly when working with diverse clientele, professionals remain sensitive to situations when trust is not attained but instead replaced by an aura of uncertainty, inconsistency, and unreliability. By being aware of such obstacles, they are able to face these challenges genuinely and responsibly. When done with all appropriate consideration of cultural differences, professionals are able to confront and resolve invisibly inappropriate behaviors that detract from productive relationships.



Visibly inappropriate. Everyone is familiar with disinviting behaviors, places, policies, processes, and programs that are clearly visible to most observers. Sometimes, as Purkey & Schmidt (1996) noted, “These disinviting forces are so obvious that they call attention to themselves” (p. 17). However, culturally diverse people might see inappropriate themes that go unnoticed by professionals of the dominant culture. When working with diverse clients, awareness of cultural nuances will heighten sensitivity to customs, behaviors, language, and other conditions that might otherwise seem harmless. Because these conditions are perceived as degrading, distasteful, or otherwise inappropriate by persons being served, they inhibit beneficial relationships. Awareness of discriminatory behaviors, the impact of policies that require Standard English, humor that relies on sexist or racist content, and other inappropriate action is a starting place for challenging visibly inappropriate styles of relating with diverse groups and individuals.

Visibly appropriate. Purkey and Schmidt (1996) observed that the third style of functioning is indicative of a professional who is technically proficient, uses precise strategies to gain appropriate objectives, and establishes beneficial relationships in a skillful manner. All these conditions would normally seem to relate with a high level of being intentionally inviting. When considering relationships with diverse populations, however, we keep in mind the power of the receiver in determining what messages are “inviting” versus which are “disinviting.” Notwithstanding Schmidt’s (1992) argument that “too much emphasis on individual perception . . . allows little possibility for the existence of universal invitations” (p. 44), by accepting the impact of culturally diverse perceptual lenses, professionals are more likely to create inviting stances with the potential to be helpful across populations. Such awareness and sensitivity allow professionals to apply a more advanced style of functioning,

what Purkey and Schmidt (1996) referred to as *invisibly appropriate*.

Invisibly appropriate. Acquiring consistent performance of visibly appropriate behavior enables professionals to gradually move to a less obvious level or style of functioning. In this style of being *invisibly appropriate*, professionals use helpful behaviors that “do not call attention to themselves” (Purkey & Schmidt, 1996, p. 18). Functioning in an invisibly appropriate style is analogous to learning to ride a bicycle. Recalling the scary event that launched you into a “mobile” world, you might remember a loving parent, grandparent, sibling, or other mentor who held the bicycle seat while you awkwardly peddled forward valiantly attempting maintain an unsteady balance. After what seemed like an eternity, comprised of several mishaps and falls with perhaps a scraped knee or shin, you eventually went solo, conquering your fears and becoming an expert cyclist. With additional experience, you soon became *one* with your bicycle, riding confidently, peddling without thinking, and sometimes biking with no hands on the handlebars! The more you rode, the stronger you performed, and the more *invisible* the effort it took to propel the bicycle forward.

Invisibly appropriate styles of functioning are effortless as well. They pay full attention to the person being served rather than to the professional offering services. When working with culturally diverse populations, certainty about their desires, needs, and other perceptions is paramount. Without knowledge about the people being served, we risk creating invisibly inappropriate rather than appropriate messages.

In addition to the four styles of functioning, Purkey and Schmidt (1996) also explained the stages of preparing, creating, and sending inviting messages. Elements in each of these stages help protect the integrity of invitations and, therefore, are particularly meaningful when assisting or working with diverse clientele.

## **Stages of Creating Inviting Messages**

Invitational theory and practice propose a preparation stage, an initiating/responding stage, and a follow-up stage in the process of creating and sending messages. Each stage contains four parts, which are reviewed here briefly.

### **Preparation Stage**

Preparing a beneficial message requires four conditions that include: (1) having the desire, (2) expecting good things, (3) preparing the setting, and (4) reading the situation. Each condition is essential to the initial stage of creating messages that have a chance of being received and accepted by the persons for whom they are intended.

Having the desire. It may seem obvious, but the desire to extend inviting messages is essential from the start. When working with diverse clients, the desire to be accepting and helpful either exists or does not. In most cases, desire is apparent to those who seek assistance early in a relationship. Verbal and nonverbal behaviors often give a clear measure, even among diverse populations, whether a willingness and desire to be of assistance are genuine.

Expecting good things. Optimism is a foundation for creating positive messages (Schmidt 2002). When professionals exhibit an optimistic posture and expect good things to happen as a result of their helping relationships, the clientele they aim to help will sense this level of confidence, and will act on it. Often, people from diverse backgrounds bring a history of oppression, deprivation, and discrimination to relationships. By maintaining a positive posture, helpers state that past transgressions by society, groups, or individuals will not keep them from moving forward.

Preparing the setting. Although desire and expectation of good things are essential to inviting messages, it is impera-

tive that each message is attractive to the person for whom it is intended. It requires careful preparation, particularly when professionals extend messages to people of diverse backgrounds. In invitational terminology, Purkey and Schmidt (1996) refer to this process as *preparing the setting*. Educators, counselors, healthcare providers, and other professionals who take the time to prepare the setting have a head start in creating successful messages and developing beneficial relationships. When considering messages for diverse clients, careful preparation of the setting includes aspects of orientation to time, understandable language or appropriate interpretation, adequate information, and a facilitative environment for the message to be received.

Reading situations. Professionals who *read situations* accurately exhibit the sensitivity, empathy, and interpersonal skill to understand what others are feeling and how they are likely to respond. With all clients in all situations this is a powerful skill and especially important when working with diverse populations. The ability to enter another person's world of perceptions is essential to creating invitational messages. It requires the use of all senses, particularly listening and observing, to understand fully whether the recipient has received the message, understood it as intended, and what the response is.

### **Initiating/Responding Stage**

The initiating/responding stage involves verbal and non-verbal behaviors, selected by the professional to send a created message and ensure that it is received as intended. This stage includes behaviors related to (1) choosing carefully, (2) acting appropriately, and (3) ensuring reception.

Choosing carefully. In choosing behaviors carefully, professional helpers make every attempt to create (1) safe environments where messages can be accepted without fear, (2) repeated opportunities for recipients to accept invitations, (3)

clear and unambiguous messages, and (4) messages that are not too rigorous in either intensity or duration (Purkey & Schmidt, 1996). People from diverse cultural backgrounds face many challenges as they enter educational, mental health clinics, or other institutions attempting to access various services in the community. By creating safe environments in which to interact, offering repeated opportunities for clients to consider various services and programs, checking language and terminology, and spacing messages and information appropriately, professionals increase the likelihood of establishing trustful relationships. Such careful selection allows clients to consider more complex, challenging, and long-term messages and invitations in the future.

Acting appropriately. Choosing carefully is important, but it must be followed by appropriate actions. In working with diverse populations, acting appropriately requires a sensitivity toward and acceptance of cultural differences (Schmidt, in press). Professionals who are the most responsible in this endeavor are those who reflect on their thoughts and actions, always willing to examine how their perceptions, beliefs, and values might interfere with the creation of successful helping relationships. When such beliefs and values are identified, professionals alter them when appropriate to accommodate clients they are trying to assist. When these beliefs and values are so integral to the professional's self-being that they cannot be altered, the practitioner knows to refer the client to another who might better facilitate a successful relationship.

Ensuring reception. Purkey and Schmidt (1996) noted that many messages are sent but never received. Sometimes, "notes are misfiled, comments go unheard, questions remain unanswered, phone messages are misplaced, and gestures escape unnoticed" (p. 88). These types of mishaps and mis-cues detract from successful helping relationships.

It is the sender's responsibility to ensure that the content of messages is received and acknowledged by recipients. Messages that are sent but not received, or received but misunderstood, contribute to breakdowns in communication. When assisting diverse populations, such breakdowns compound the challenge of creating beneficial relationships. Unless full messages are received and their meaning acknowledged, confusion and misunderstanding may result. To avoid such instances, professionals working with diverse clientele take the time necessary to ensure reception and understanding.

### **Follow-up Stage**

Invitational practice encourages processes that follow-up initial interactions and follow-through on agreements or arrangements made within helping relationships. In the follow-up stage of creating and sending inviting messages, professionals: (1) interpret and understand responses, (2) negotiate different positions, (3) evaluate the overall relationship, and (4) reinforce the trust that has been established.

Interpreting and understanding responses. Working with diverse populations, requires an accurate interpretation and understanding of responses given to numerous messages received. As Purkey and Schmidt (1996) pointed out, "Clients have the options of accepting invitations, not accepting them, ignoring them, modifying them with a counter proposal, or tabling them until another time" (p. 89). How diverse populations demonstrate their acceptance, modification, disregard, or rejection of messages sent to them are important components of the entire process of helping. Again, many cultural aspects must be considered in this complex relationship, including family values, spirituality, community, time orientation, sexual orientation, gender, and others. What might seem like an appropriate decision to the professional could prove stressful to a diverse

client who feels obliged to consider an array of cultural implications.

Negotiating. Invitational practice encourages the use of negotiation when professionals and clients encounter roadblocks to successful relationships. Here, professionals must be careful to understand the cultural implications involved in such a process. For example, people from some cultures might agree with professionals out of deference to authority. In such instances, the process of negotiation, in its purest sense, might be foreign to these clients. Professionals want to be in tune with students, clients, and patients from cultures that espouse strong hierarchical relationships, while exploring collaborative processes that might open reasonable possibilities and alternatives for them to consider. What is essential in this *negotiating* phase is that clients be comfortable with both the process and the choices presented.

Evaluating the process. Various forms of evaluation are unavoidable in most human interactions and relationships. Purkey and Schmidt (1996) observed, "Dinner guests comment on menus, voters choose candidates, judges rule on evidence, teachers grade students, students evaluate teachers, managers get bonuses, parents monitor children, and audiences applaud performances" (p. 90). Proper evaluation of any type of helping process enables both the professional and client to make decisions about the present relationship and future interaction. The professional might ponder, "Am I knowledgeable about this person's culture and language to be of beneficial assistance?" At the same time, a client might wonder, "Does this person accept and understand me, my background, and the situation?"

Sometimes, evaluation processes include information from people who know the client, such as family members, teachers, counselors, healthcare providers, and others. In such instances, cultural sensitivity is paramount to ensure

the integrity of the helping relationship. What are the implications for the client of including family members? Do the teachers, counselors or healthcare professionals who share information have the cultural knowledge and sensitivity to make their contribution credible? In addition, when tests, rating scales, questionnaires, and inventories become part of the evaluation process, is the professional assured of the cultural appropriateness and unbiased validity of these instruments when used with particular clients? By using genuine and unbiased processes, professionals work to strengthen the trust established throughout helping relationships.

Reinforcing trust. Trust is essential in any inviting relationship (Purkey & Novak, 1996; Purkey & Schmidt, 1996). It is especially important when working with clients who are unfamiliar with places, policies, programs, and processes of a newly adopted culture or country. By maintaining a consistently dependable posture, including acceptance and understanding of the diverse backgrounds that people bring to professional interactions, teacher, counselors, administrators, and other helpers are able to reinforce the trust imperative in all successful relationships. As Purkey and Schmidt (1996) noted, "Without a reasonable level of trust, the client will not self-disclose, explore new options, or take the risks necessary to find new ways of being" (p. 92). Establishing such trust, initially, and maintaining a level that invites diverse clients to feel accepted and willing to explore newly adopted worlds while taking personal and social risks that might alter past worldviews are related to another metaphor found in invitational theory and practice called *honoring the net* (Purkey & Schmidt, 1996, Stafford, 1992, 2003).

## **Honoring the Net**

Stafford (2003) emphasized, "One of the more pivotal notions in the discussion of invitational theory has been that



of honoring the net” (p. 9). The net is a metaphor that represents the hypothetical boundaries separating professional helpers from their clients—a sacred boundary that generally is not crossed or violated. As such, “the net” in invitational practice is similar to the sports of tennis and volleyball, where a point is lost when a player touches or crosses the net. This concept is especially important when relating with diverse populations. As Stafford (2003) surmised, it is akin to the notion of unconditional positive regard first mentioned by Carl Rogers (1951). Stafford (2003) also highlighted the important quality of respectfulness and the skill of listening in facilitating beneficial helping relationships while valuing differences that exist between professionals and their clients.

An important aspect of honoring the net is that the client always controls the process. In practice, professionals honor the net, but clients can decide whether to allow them to enter their world and get closer to knowing who they are. “The client needs to be assured that he or she may partially lift the net if the client chooses” (Stafford, 1992, pp. 211-212). At the same time, Stafford (2003) indicated that occasions might happen when professionals feel compelled to violate the net, particularly when clients demonstrate harmful behaviors or destructive decisions. He cautioned that limitations placed on honoring the net “is an issue for each of us individually, and this is an issue which each of us must address in our own way” (p. 17).

When working with diverse populations, the notion of honoring the net requires that professionals be alert to what is happening within helping relationships and remain aware of the cultural influences that matter most to each person involved in the process. Equally important, professionals are aware of their *timing* as “a critical ingredient that affects both the stages and choices available” within the scope of invitational theory and practice (Purkey & Schmidt, 1996, p.97). Being aware of one’s timing of suggestions, for example, relates to the intentionality with which professionals form help-

ful interactions with their clients. As noted earlier, intentionality is the condition that often distinguishes differences between inviting and disinviting relationships (Schmidt, 2002).

## Conclusion

For more than 30 years, theorists and practitioners have explored, developed, and implemented ideas and concepts that have come to be called *invitational theory and practice* (Purkey, 1992a, 1992b). During that time, professionals from a wide range of educational, therapeutic, and healthcare settings have embraced assumptions and approaches put forth by this field of study, commonly known as *invitational education*. Among these professionals are teachers, counselors, nurses, psychologists, administrators, and others who believe that self-concept theory and perceptual psychology are foundations for understanding human development and interaction. Furthermore, they believe that successful relationships, whether in teaching, counseling, leadership, or other endeavors, are established through the intentional creation of beneficial messages chosen and sent within a caring context that dependably demonstrates optimism, trust, and respect for all persons involved in the process.

This article has revisited many of the assumptions and concepts espoused by invitational theory and practice to illustrate how they might relate to professional interactions with diverse populations. Over the years, literature and research about invitational education has not addressed the nuances of applying this approach with students, parents, employees, clients, patients, or other populations from diverse backgrounds. This article has taken the initial step in this important process. The world of the 1970s has changed considerably in this 21<sup>st</sup> century, and all expectations are that the populations to be served in the future by schools, counseling centers, health clinics, and other human service

arenas will reflect even greater diversity of culture, family background, sexuality, spirituality, and other statuses that influence people's development and worldviews (Schmidt, in press). In invitational theory and practice continue as viable belief systems and professional approaches to use in a variety of settings, and they will remain so because of reflection and incorporation of relative multicultural considerations.

Such multicultural considerations will include how individuals from diverse backgrounds perceive the language and terminology of invitational education. What adjustments will enable people to understand and incorporate the essence of inviting and disinviting concepts into their language and frame of reference? Another important consideration will be the balance between *individualism*, sometimes touted by self-development theories (e.g., as illustrated by terms such as "self-reliance," "independence," and "autonomy"), and more *collectivistic* philosophies found in other world cultures.

Lastly, this article hopes that by initiating discussion about implications of invitational theory and practice when working with diverse populations, followers of invitational education will be inspired to design and pursue research study about this topic. The veracity of any theory of practice depends on research findings that support its assumptions and concepts. As the world continues to shrink and countries become more diverse in the populations being served, advocates of invitational education worldwide will want to ensure that their approaches can be applied with confidence across student, client, and patient groups.

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