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The Journal of Invitational Theory and Practice (JITP) promotes the study, application, and research of invitational theory. It is an online peer reviewed scholarly publication presenting articles to advance invitational learning and living and the foundations that support this theory of practice, particularly self-concept theory and perceptual psychology.

The International Alliance for Invitational Education® (IAIE) is chartered by the State of North Carolina. The IAIE is a not-for-profit group of educators and allied professionals throughout the world, dedicated to the development of positive school, work, and home environments as well as opposed to those forces that demean and defeat human potential. Come learn how to create climates intentionally based on care, optimism, respect, and trust while networking with IAIE members around the world.

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THE JOURNAL OF INVITATIONAL THEORY AND PRACTICE

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Editorial

The 2023 Journal of Invitational Theory and Practice (JITP) continues the legacy of our founders by promoting the tenets of Invitational Education (IE). This year you will find reflective essays that accentuate our theory to effective practice. You will have the opportunity to metaphorically walk with Dr. Jenny Edwards, as she triangulates IE theory with her physical and spiritual triumph to exemplify the importance of relationships to any educational reform endeavor. You will experience Dr. Sean Schatt's treatise that reminds us of the importance of Self-Concept Theory, which is one of three Invitational Education's theoretical foundations. The final theory to practice essay was a collaborative outcome of participation at the IAIE World Conference at the University of Hawaii in Manoa and details how consistent implementation of intentionality, care, optimism, respect, and trust (ICORT) influenced a district's professional learning community and optimized its students' sustained success.

This part of the 2023 JITP is meant to include a charge or challenge to the reader. Through decades of advocacy and effective practice, proponents of IE theory understand that school reform requires systemic change, best done through a metamorphosis resulting from interdependent analysis of the institution's people, places, policies, programs, and processes (the Five Ps). Structural analysis of school climate discerns whether any part of the whole is disinviting (Purkey & Siegel, 2013). We know there is no quick fix for educational problems. However, we believe the IE framework encourages ongoing vigilance before affirming sustained change (Purkey & Siegel, 2013; Strahan & Purkey, 1992) because changing how a school operates requires transforming its people (Asbill, 1994). Such an axiom must be strengthened through ongoing research.

During 2024, we must lead others in the "direction and purpose for all Invitational thought and action" (Purkey & Novak, 2016, p 11). In this endeavor, you are encouraged to research, analyze, and disseminate the benefits of our intentional, caring, optimistic, respectful, and trusting invitations upon an institution's people, places, policies, programs, and processes (5Ps). For instance, the ICORT elements of IE theory focus on creating a positive and inclusive learning environment. While IE theory is more qualitative and philosophy-oriented, it is possible to incorporate ICORT as either a dependent or independent variable in quantitative research involving initiatives such as social-emotional learning (SEL). Therefore, when developing

quantitative methodology with ICORT as the dependent variable, potential researchers are invited to consider the following:

- Explicate ICORT to create operational definitions. Clearly define and operationalize each of the ICORT variables in measurable terms. For instance, develop specific indicators or survey items that capture behaviors or attitudes related to intentionality, care, optimism, respect, and trust.
- Create quantitative measurement tools. Design surveys or questionnaires that align with the operational definitions of ICORT. These instruments should be quantifiable and capable of producing numerical data. Likert scales or other quantitative measurement scales can be used to assess participants' perceptions of the learning environment in terms of intentionality, care, optimism, respect, and trust.
- Plan for pre- and post-assessments. Implement pre- and post-assessments to measure changes in ICORT variables before and after the SEL initiatives. This allows for subsequent analysis of the impact of social-emotional learning interventions on the perceived level of intentionality, care, optimism, respect, and trust within the educational setting.
- Establish comparison groups. Create control or comparison groups to compare the outcomes of SEL initiatives. Ensure that there is a group that does not receive the intervention, thereby assessing whether changes in ICORT variables are specific to the SEL program.
- Plan for statistical analysis. Utilize appropriate statistical analyses to examine the relationships between SEL initiatives and ICORT variables. This may involve t-tests, ANOVA, regression analysis, or other statistical techniques depending on the research design and data distribution. In this regard, either become astute yourself or network well with a quantitative methodologist.
- Embrace the efficacy of longitudinal studies. Consider conducting longitudinal studies to track changes in ICORT variables over an extended period. This approach provides a more in-depth understanding of the sustained impact of SEL initiatives on intentionality, care, optimism, respect, and trust.
- Incorporate qualitative data. While the focus is on quantitative measures, consider integrating qualitative data through interviews or open-ended survey questions. Mixed

methodology can provide additional insights into the participants' experiences and perceptions related to ICORT variables.

- Validate your measurement scale (Boateng, Neilands, Frongillo, Melgar-Quiñonez, & Young, 2018). Ensure any measurement scales developed for ICORT variables are valid and reliable. This involves testing the instruments to confirm that they are accurately measuring what they intend to measure.

Alternatively, when conducting quantitative research involving social-emotional learning (SEL) initiatives, the basic Invitational Education (IE) elements: Intentionality, care, optimism, respect, and trust (ICORT) can be considered as independent variables. Potential researchers seeking to develop their methodology in this way must still operationalize concepts, but their strategies will differ to establish each aspect of ICORT as the independent variables in the quantitative study. Therefore, when developing your quantitative methodology with ICORT elements as the independent variables, potential researchers are invited to consider the following:

- Separate the ICORT mnemonic to create operational definitions. Clearly define each of the ICORT variables in measurable terms. Develop operational definitions that can be translated into specific behaviors, attitudes, or observable indicators within the context of the SEL initiatives.
- Create quantitative measurement tools. Design reliable and valid measurement tools to assess the level of intentionality, care, optimism, respect, and trust. This could involve developing survey items, questionnaires, or other quantitative instruments that capture participants' perceptions of these variables.
- Establish baseline measurement. Conduct a baseline measurement of the ICORT variables before implementing the SEL initiatives. This will serve as a reference point to compare changes and assess the impact of the interventions.
- Establish experimental and control groups. When (ethically) possible, establish both experimental and control groups. The experimental group would receive the SEL interventions, while the control group would not. This allows for a comparison of changes in ICORT variables between the two groups.

- Plan for either randomization or matching. Whenever randomization is not feasible, consider using matching techniques. This will help to ensure that the experimental and control groups are comparable in terms of ICORT variables at the beginning of the study.
- Implement well-developed SEL initiatives. Once the research-based SEL initiatives are clearly developed, implement with the experimental group. This could include activities, programs, or interventions designed to enhance social-emotional skills and well-being.
- Conduct post-intervention measurement. After the completion of the SEL initiatives, measure the ICORT variables again. This post-intervention measurement will help assess whether there are significant changes in intentionality, care, optimism, respect, and trust as a result of the SEL interventions.
- Plan for statistical analysis. Use appropriate statistical analyses to examine the impact of SEL initiatives on the ICORT variables. This may involve conducting inferential statistical tests, such as t-tests or ANOVA, to determine whether there are significant differences between the experimental and control groups. Seriously, if you took Statistics as pass/fail, you are encouraged to network well with a quantitative methodologist or plan to hire a research assistant proficient with a quantitative analysis tool such as IBM's Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). SPSS is a comprehensive statistical software package used for data analysis in social science research. SPSS includes a wide range of statistical procedures, data manipulation capabilities, and data visualization tools. Common analyses include descriptive statistics, inferential statistics (t-tests, ANOVA, regression), factor analysis, and more.
- Alternatively, Microsoft's Excel is a spreadsheet program widely used for data entry, manipulation, and basic statistical analysis. While not as sophisticated as dedicated statistical software such as SPSS, Excel is readily accessible. Excel can perform basic statistical analyses, including descriptive statistics, t-tests, and correlations.
- Utilize a tool to conduct correlation analysis. Explore correlations between specific components of SEL initiatives and changes in ICORT variables. This can help identify which aspects of the interventions are most strongly associated with improvements in intentionality, care, optimism, respect, and trust.
- Embrace the efficacy of longitudinal studies. While time is always a factor in conducting and completing research projects, consider conducting longitudinal analyses to assess the

sustainability of changes in ICORT variables over time. The result could provide clearer insights into the long-term impact of SEL initiatives.

By following the steps suggested above, researchers can quantitatively investigate the relationship between SEL initiatives, and ICORT as either a dependent variable or as independent variables represented by the ICORT mnemonic as explicated in Invitational Education theory. This structured approach provides a quantifiable way to evaluate the effectiveness of social-emotional learning interventions in fostering positive and inclusive educational environments.

However, the JITP editor welcomes ALL opportunities to promote the study, application, and research of Invitational Education theory and practice. You and your colleagues are invited to submit scholarly papers that identify how Invitational Education theory and practice guides reform, sustains success, or reinforces best practices through research. To advance Invitational Education theory and practice to an international audience, scholarly articles within the JITP come from global sources, educational practitioners, organizational leaders, and multidisciplinary researchers. Prospective authors may email manuscripts to: ucan@rcn.com. Authors must follow specific guidelines (p.67) when submitting manuscripts for publication consideration.

Sincerely,

Chris James Anderson, Ed.D.
Editor of the 2023 Journal of Invitational Theory and Practice

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Building Strong Relationships to Create Inviting Schools: Tips and Techniques

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Introduction

The theme for the fall 2023 International Alliance for Invitational Education conference was, "Invitational Education: A Relationships-Based Framework for Healthy and Connected Schools." Strong relationships are important. According to Purkey et al. (2016), "All the professional success in the universe will not make up for lack of success with significant others" (p. 31). As teachers, we are powerful role models for our students. They will learn to be personally inviting with others and build strong relationships by watching the way we are personally inviting and build strong relationships with others in the school and with them. We can use intentionality, care, optimism, respect, and trust as we are building these relationships (Purkey et al., 2020; Anderson, 2021).

I recently had a powerful experience related to the importance of being with people. In October 2023, I walked between 9 and 16 miles a day on the last 100 kilometers of the Camino de Santiago. I invited friends to go with me; however, they could not imagine walking that far in one day.

I thought I would be fine walking by myself. Fortunately, I ran into a group of women who invited me to walk with them. It was a lot more fun walking with them than by myself, and I learned even more powerfully the importance of relationships and being with others.

This paper includes four sections. The first section includes the research behind the importance of building relationships with adults, and the second section includes strategies for doing so. The third section contains research on the importance of building relationships with students, and the fourth section includes strategies for building those relationships. Many of the ideas for adults can be applied to students and vice versa. We are all doing these things. The purpose of this paper is to celebrate the many things we are consciously or unconsciously doing as we are building strong relationships. When we have positive relationships with both adults and students, we will have healthy and connected schools.

The Importance of Building Strong Relationships with Adults

Why build strong relationships with adults? We feel better when we are relating to others. Numerous research studies confirm the importance of relationships. These are just a few of them.

Relationships were associated with longevity and health in a study of four longitudinal samples from the United States (Yang et al., 2016). When people were more socially integrated, they had less inflammation. On the other hand, when they were less socially integrated, they had as much elevated inflammation as they would have with being physically inactive. Hypertension and obesity were also related to social isolation. The authors concluded that, "Social integration protects health and promotes longevity" (p. 582).

In a study by Teo et al. (2013), 4,642 adults between the ages of 25 and 75 completed surveys in 1995-1996 and 10 years later. The researchers assessed the quality of the participants' relationships as well as the degree to which they were socially isolated. Those who did not have social support, did not have quality relationships, and were strained socially "had more than double the risk of depression . . . than those with the highest quality" (p. 1). The researchers concluded that "quality of social relationships is a major risk factor for major depression" (p. 1).

Nguyen et al. (2022) asked two groups of participants (N = 268 and N = 216) about their :perceived social support, self-disclosure, social safeness, and mental well-being" (p. 1211). They found that when people perceived that they had support from other people, they had high levels of well-being. The researchers concluded that "relationships allow people to self-disclose information and feel socially safe" (p. 1219).

High-quality relationships at work with both supervisors and colleagues can also lead to positive outcomes for employees. In Study 1, Schermuly and Meyer (2016) gathered data from 318 participants in a variety of industries. They measured psychological empowerment, emotional exhaustion, and Leader-Member Exchange (LMX), which is "unique dyadic relationships between supervisors and subordinates that develop through interactions and exchanges" (p. 674). In a second study, they invited workers in a variety of organizations to fill out surveys 12 weeks apart. Although 541 participants completed the surveys the first time it was administered, only 144 completed the survey the second time. They filled out instruments on LMX, Team-Member Exchange (TMX), and depression. In the first study, the researchers found that when the participants had high-quality relationships at work with their supervisors, they were more

empowered, and they had less emotional exhaustion (Study 1) and less depression (Study 2). Their relationships with their colleagues (TMX) were as important as their relationships with their supervisor "for preventing psychological health issues" (Schermuly & Meyer, 2016, p. 673).

Trusting relationships among adults are also critical in schools. Bryk and Schneider (2002) conducted a 3-year longitudinal study of 12 schools in the Chicago Public Schools to discover what factors enabled schools to bring about changes. The research teams "conducted more than 200 interviews, attended 150 school activities . . . , spent 24 days observing in classrooms in each school, and held 9 focus groups, 3 each with principals, teachers, and parents" (p. 145). They discovered the importance of relational trust in bringing about improvements in schools. They concluded that in schools in which teachers had high levels of relational trust, teachers collaborated more to make changes because they were willing to take risks. In addition, students made major gains in their learning. On the other hand, in schools with low relational trust, the educators brought about few changes, and student reading and math scores remained the same.

Goddard et al. (2007) studied the relationship between teacher collaboration and student achievement. The study included 452 teachers and 2,546 students in fourth grade in 47 public elementary schools. They found that when the teachers had higher levels of collaboration to improve the schools, student test scores in reading and mathematics were higher. The researchers concluded that, "The explanation for our results is that teacher collaboration fostered learning that improved instruction" (p. 892).

Strategies for Building Strong Relationships with Adults

I would invite you to think of a strong relationship you have with someone. What are some of the characteristics of it? What benefits do you gain from being in that relationship?

Now, think back to the beginning of that relationship. How did you begin it? How did you help it to grow? What were some of the things you did, either consciously or unconsciously, as you were developing the relationship?

When I started teaching time management, I found a Garfield cartoon that conveyed what I wanted to share. Nermal, the gullible dog, was standing on the table. "Jump into the pillow, Nermal," said Garfield. As he jumped, Garfield pulled the pillow out, and Nermal fell on the floor. "Splat!" Nermal said, "You did that on purpose!" Garfield replied, "I do everything on purpose!" Doing everything on purpose also applies to building relationships.

Canevello and Crocker (2010) studied 180 college roommate dyads in which one person in the dyad had the specific goal of creating a high-quality relationship with the roommate. They did two studies, one lasting a semester with 115 roommate dyads and the other lasting for three weeks with 65 roommate dyads. By one person having that goal, the relationships were extremely responsive and of high quality. According to the researchers,

> Our findings suggest that people's interpersonal goals (to either support others or construct and maintain desired images of the self) can initiate or inhibit responsiveness and its projection and reciprocation in relationships, which predicts relationship quality and reinforces interpersonal goals for both relationship partners. In light of these data, we suggest that people not only can create the types of relationships that they want—those characterized by high responsiveness, and consequently, higher quality— but can also create responsive, high-quality relationships for others. (p. 104)

We can consciously focus on building strong relationships with every person with whom we interact. According to Maya Angelou, "People will not remember what you said; however, they will always remember how you made them feel." In the morning and throughout the day, we can ask ourselves key questions such as,

"How can I help each person with whom I interact today to feel affirmed and uplifted?"

"How can I build a lasting relationship with everyone with whom I speak today?"

"How can I build up each person with whom I speak today?"

"How can I help each person have new insights today?"

"How can I truly listen to each person today?"

"How can I be a blessing to each person I meet today?"

"How can I talk with people today with the intention of building a lasting relationship?"

Presuming Positive Intentions and Avoiding Labels

Part of building strong relationships involves presuming positive intentions and avoid using labels. People will not always do what we think they should do. People generally have positive intentions for doing what they do, even though we might not realize their positive intentions at the time.

Once I co-presented a Cognitive Coaching training with a colleague, Bruce Wellman. The participants were in a million-dollar grant that three of us had written and involved training over

three years. We had approximately 100 people in the room at round tables. It was around 10:00 in the morning. The teachers at one of the back tables were making a lot of noise. I told Bruce, "They are being rude (a label)." Bruce wisely said, "I avoid making a judgment until I have brainstormed at least 30 reasons that people are doing what they are doing." This goes along with presuming that people have positive intentions. He said, "Let's have some fun with it." Since they were doing an exercise, we brainstormed numerous reasons for the way they were acting, such as "a mouse ran under their table." Then he said, "Let's go back and talk with them." What was happening? One of the women in the training was pregnant with her first baby and needed to go to the hospital that day to give birth. She had been so committed to attending the training that she had come to the training rather than going to the hospital. The women at her table were timing her contractions so that she could stay as long as possible. What a lesson! Since then, I have resisted giving labels and presumed that people had positive intentions for doing what they were doing.

Remembering Past Conversations

Dr. Judith Arin-Krupp, who presented for the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD), taught me a valuable lesson about remembering past conversations. Every summer, ASCD would have a conference in Vail, Colorado, which was an hour and 20 minutes from my home. As a member of Colorado ASCD, I would go to Vail and volunteer to assist one of the speakers. I would make sure the speaker had what he/she needed, go to lunch with the speaker if that was what the speaker wanted to do, and serve as a hostess for the session.

For several years in a row, I introduced Dr. Arin-Krupp. Every time I saw her, she would remember our conversation from the previous summer and ask me about it. I could not believe that she cared enough to remember what I had said the previous summer when I could barely remember it.

Listening Deeply

We can listen deeply to what other people are saying in order to build strong relationships. I am a Cognitive Coaching trainer, and we teach people to listen below the surface to what others are saying and then to paraphrase and ask invitational questions to help expand or focus their thinking. I often ask people in training how many people they have in their life who truly listen to them. They respond, "Not many."

Kluger and Zaidel (2013) asked 238 employees from various organizations to rate their supervisor's skills in listening and leadership. They found that "constructive listening is the sole

predictor, and a strong one, of considerate leadership" (p. 80). According to the authors, "One can conclude with a high confidence that, at the very least, people who are perceived to be good listeners in a group or work setting are also likely to be perceived as having desirable leadership qualities" (p. 81).

Paraphrasing

We can offer paraphrases to people to show we understood what they said such as, "You are feeling X," "You are upset about Y," "You are considering two alternatives, A and B," and "You highly value C." Seehausen et al. (2014) conducted a study to determine the effects of cognitive paraphrasing as opposed to unempathetic responses. They invited 22 participants to talk about a situation in which they were experiencing social conflict. The researchers asked the participants 12 questions. After some of the responses to the questions, the researchers gave cognitive paraphrases in which they repeated back what the person had said without agreeing or disagreeing. For other responses, they gave unempathetic responses in which they indicated that they did not understand what the person was saying. The researchers used measures such as fMRI and skin conductance response. They found that the participants felt understood and felt better after they were paraphrased. In contrast, the participants did not feel understood and felt worse after hearing the unempathetic responses. They also found differences in the fMRI and skin conductance responses.

Sharing Feelings

Purkey and Siegel (2013) talked about the importance of sharing our feelings with others. We can also gain insights into ourselves by sharing with others. As previously discussed, Nguyen et al. (2022) conducted a study to determine whether a relationship existed between participants' perception of social support and their self-assessed well-being. They found that when people were interacting in in-person relationships, "self-disclosure and social safeness both indirectly influenced the relationship between perceived social support and well-being" (p. 1217). They suggested that "in-person relationships may allow people to improve their mental well-being by increasing their ability to self-disclose and feel socially safe" (p. 1217).

Spending Time Together

To build lasting relationships, we need to spend time together. We can go to lunch, breakfast, coffee, or dinner together. We can also intentionally celebrate happy events. We never know when the last time will be we are with someone.

The Power of Words

We can consciously choose the words we use with others to help them feel good. When we say words such as "downer," "stress," "negative," "put-downs," and "horrible," how might people feel? How might people feel when they hear words such as "fun," "excitement," "uplifting," "wonderful," "encouraging," and "positive?" We can choose words to help people feel uplifted and affirmed.

Using Positive Presuppositions

As we are talking, we can use words to imply that the person is self-directed, capable, and can accomplish anything he/she wants to accomplish. We can embed words into what we say that lift the person up. "As a highly skilled professional, what might be some of the strategies you have thought about to use in this situation?" "How will you feel after you have accomplished this?" "How might you be using the skills you are gaining in the days, weeks, months, and years to come?"

Encouraging People

When I was training to walk the Camino, I decided to climb a nearby 10,000 -foot mountain. A lot of people ride bicycles up that mountain. When I was about 1/3 of the way up, a woman went by me on a bike and yelled back, "See you at the top!" I laughed and said somewhat sarcastically, "Right! Maybe, maybe not!" She yelled back, "You will make it! I bet money on it!" Often on that hike, I was tempted to give up and turn back. It was a steep climb; however, I kept her words in my mind. "You will make it! I bet money on it!" When I was almost to the top, I saw her coming down. She said, "I told you that you would make it!" I told her how much her words of encouragement had meant to me, and I made it to the top!

Tell People How Much You Appreciate Them and Give Them Specific Reasons

Debra Coffey, the Chair of the IE Board of Trustees, is a master at this. She tells us how much she appreciates us on the Board and gives specific instances of how we assisted.

In addition to telling people in our lives how much we appreciate them; we can search out people from the past and let them know how much we appreciated their influence in our lives. I love learning to speak other languages as a result of my high school French teacher, Marvin Moody. After a lengthy search, I found him at Indiana University. When my husband was attending

a conference in Indianapolis, Indiana, I went with him and drove to Bloomington, Indiana to take Mr. Moody to lunch at a French restaurant. I told him how much his teaching had meant to me.

Recently, a student whom I had spent a great deal of time helping with her writing several terms ago sent me glowing feedback that she had received on her writing from a faculty whose course she was currently taking. She said she could only have received that positive feedback because of the time I had spent helping her with her writing. I cherish her letter.

Remembering Important Dates

I am trained to do life coaching as well as to coach people who are grieving or dying. In that training, I learned the importance of remembering anniversaries such as when people pass away, as well as people's birthdays and anniversaries. I know how much I appreciate it when people remember the date when my husband passed away five years ago and send me a text or call on that day. I keep a list and write new dates as I learn about them. I subscribe to Jacquie Lawson cards for $35 a year. Once or twice a month, I go through my list, select greeting cards, and write messages to go out on a particular day. It seems to mean a lot to my friends that I would remember their special days. We can also send cards when people are ill. If they are out for a long time, we can send a card to welcome them back.

What ideas might you like to start doing or continue doing? What additional ideas might you have for building strong relationships?

Building Strong Relationships with Students

It is also important for us to build strong relationships with students. We can use many of the ideas for adults with students. According to Purkey (2000), "Students . . . tend to see themselves as the teacher sees them. A teacher cannot escape the fact that the self-talk of students is within his or her influence" (p. 57).

The Importance of Building Strong Relationships with Students

Numerous studies support the importance of building strong relationships with students. In a study of 18 high schools with 2,079 students, when students had more positive relationships with teachers, they were more engaged in learning (i.e., academic participation, enjoyment, and aspirations) (Martin & Collie, 2019)

In a systematic review of literature that included 46 published studies, 13 of which were longitudinal, on the relationships between the relationships between teachers and students and the degree to which students were engaged in learning, higher levels of student engagement "(i.e.,

psychological engagement, academic grades, school attendance, disruptive behaviors, suspension, and dropout)" were related to high quality teacher-student relationships (Quin, 2017, p. 345).

Relationships work both ways. Split et al. (2011) reviewed literature and suggested that "teachers have a basic need for relatedness with the students in their class" (p. 467). Relationships with students can impact teachers' self-esteem and wellbeing because they impact teachers' need to relate well with students. Furthermore, when students misbehave, it impacts teachers' need to have positive relationships with students.

In 1955, 698 infants in Kauai, Hawaii started participating in a 30-year study to determine how they fared throughout their lives in spite of conditions in their childhood. Werner (1989) focused on "high risk" children who, in spite of experiencing many difficulties growing up such as parents who were alcoholics and suffered from mental disturbances, poverty, and other situations, became healthy and productive adults with good relationships with others. What made the difference? Werner found that "The resilient children in the study had at least one person in their lives who accepted them unconditionally, regardless of temperamental idiosyncrasies or physical or mental handicaps" (p. 111). Werner went on to say that "All children can be helped to become more resilient if adults in their lives encourage their independence, teach them appropriate communication and self-help skills and model as well as reward acts of helpfulness and caring" (p. 111).

It is also important for educators to truly like their students and believe that they can achieve. Babad et al. (1991) conducted a study with 151 judges, including 4th grade students, 7th grade students, 10th grade students, teachers in training, and experienced elementary teachers. The researchers showed videotapes of a teacher talking about a student for whom she had high expectations and a student for whom she had low expectations. Then, they showed videotapes of the teacher talking with the student who was off camera for whom she had high expectations and the student for whom she had low expectations. The clips lasted 10 seconds. Some clips included only the audio, others included only the video, and others included both audio and video. The judges rated whether the teacher felt that the student was an excellent student or a weak student, and they determined whether the teacher liked or did not like the student. All of the judges were able to accurately assess how the teacher felt about the student in much less than 10 seconds. According to Purkey (2000), "Positive teacher self-talk about students involves viewing students as able, valuable, and responsible" (p. 59).

It is also important to help students to build relationships with each other. Dr. Isidro Rubi at the University of Colorado at Boulder was in charge of the Minority Freshman Engineering program. His program had a high level of dropout in the Freshman year. He increased the retention rate to approximately 80% by doing one thing. When a student would go to a faculty member for advice, the faculty member would say, "_____ (name of another student) has been working on that and might be able to provide you with assistance/advice (or whatever)." Of course, faculty would share with permission and seek to maintain confidences. By networking students with each other and enabling them to form relationships with each other, he was able to help students stay in the program because they were connected to each other.

Strategies for Building Strong Relationships with Students

Some of the ideas below might be helpful in building strong relationships with students. What could be some additional ideas that come to mind from reading this list?

- Getting to know what is important to students and talking with them about those topics
- Honoring students on their birthdays
- Expressing unconditional positive regard for students
- Avoiding saying "I" and "you." Instead, say, "we," "us," and "our." This will help students to feel like they are members of a group.
- Spending time at the beginning of the class asking students about things that are important to them…
- Teaching students to focus on growth mindset rather than fixed mindset through words and questions…
- Inviting students to own their successes: "Bet you feel good about that."
- Inviting students to attribute their success to working hard: "Tell me why you were successful." "I worked hard."
- Surprising the students with a snack or a movie from time to time
- Keeping up-to-date on what is important to students (i.e., sports teams, athletic activities, etc.)
- Pointing out specific tasks that students do well
- Calling parents to tell them things their students did well

- Passing on compliments to students that other people made about them ("Someone said . . . .")
- Using students' names when talking with them
- Saying, "You are the type of student who . . . ."
- Holding high expectations for students: "You can definitely do this."
- Giving students positive identities: "You are a mathematician, a fast reader, a good student, a good friend, etc."
- Truly listening to what students are saying
- Paraphrasing what students said. Use "you" rather than "I." You are feeling sad." You are considering two alternatives." You would like to do X." "You greatly value . . . ."

Conclusion

The purpose of this paper was to share some of the many studies that have been done on the importance of building strong relationships with adults and students. Some of the many ideas for building those relationships were also shared. What might you do as a result of reading this article?

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An Introduction to Self-Concept Theory: How self-perception shapes behavior

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Invitational Theory is rooted in three theoretical foundations, the perceptual tradition, self-concept theory, and a democratic ethos (Purkey, Novak, and Fretz, 2020). This essay focuses on the second of these foundations, *Self-Concept Theory*. Self-Concept Theory provides a theoretical foundation for understanding the nature and impact of each individual's most fundamental perception, the perception of self, or their self-concept.

In this essay the author seeks to re-introduce the Invitational community to this important theoretical foundation, which could profoundly and positively impact the enacting and application of invitational theory. All human behavior is fundamentally shaped by how the individual perceives themselves. The author begins by providing an overview of self-concept theory, exploring some of the central tenets and implications. The author then reviews the history of the development of the theory, followed by a summary of some of the theory's foundational elements. The essay concludes with an exploration of several potential implications and applications for the Invitational community.

Key Words: *Invitational Theory, Invitational Education, Self-Concept, Self-Concept Theory, Perceptual Theory, Self-Concept-As-Learner*

Introduction

One of the key lessons I learned as a teacher and educational leader is that you can't force someone to change their behavior, even if it may sometimes seem that you are able to do so. You can gain compliance through the (mis)use of your power, of course. But that is not the same thing. What I discovered, however, is that you can exert a powerful positive influence on others (and on their perceptions and behavior) through your own words and actions. When I saw students struggling with inappropriate behavior, I recognized that if I could impact the way they looked at the situation, they would often change their own behavior in wise and appropriate ways. This is what people working in the helping professions seek to do: to help people change the way they look at things, knowing that a change in perception is likely to result in a change in behavior. The most important perception that an individual often needs to change is the way they look at themselves. The fundamental perception that impacts human behavior is self-perception. How an individual perceives others is also quite significant, of course. But self-perception comes first.

Perceiving *self-as-able* and *self-as-important* is very different than perceiving *self-as-unable* and *self-as-insignificant*.

In a previous publication, (2022), I re-introduced perceptual theory to the invitational theory community, identifying it as one of the three foundational theories that contributed to the development of the inviting tradition. Purkey, Novak, and Fretz (2020) remind us that invitational theory is firmly established on three foundations, *perceptual theory*, *self-concept theory*, and the *democratic ethos*. Through the 2022 article I highlighted the importance of understanding and applying the insights of perceptual theory to authentically and effectively enact invitational practices. In the article at hand, the focus will be on the second of the three foundational theories, *self-concept theory*, which seeks to understand the nature and impact of self-perception. Understanding and acting on this foundational theory will better position members of the invitational tradition to successfully enact invitational theory. Understanding how an individual perceives themselves will allow those who seek to care for them to successfully communicate inviting messages, and to avoid being perceived as disinviting. It is also likely to position the people we work with to become more self- and other-aware as well.

What is Self-Concept Theory?

In an upcoming section I will review some of the history and origins of self-concept theory. For now, it is appropriate to begin with a brief introduction. Self-concept is a theoretical construct, a hypothetical tool intended to help us understand human behavior. In his seminal publication, renowned psychologist, Carl Rogers (1959) makes a strong case for the value and impact of constructs that have emerged in his field, noting that such constructs are pervasive and, "have application to a wide variety of human activities" (p. 246). Rogers identifies self-concept as one such construct. Rogers (1959) describes self-concept as a gestalt, "a configuration in which the alteration of one minor aspect could completely alter the whole pattern" (p. 201). Art Combs (Combs & Avila, 1985), a contemporary of Rogers, and the originator of perceptual theory, reminds us that the self-concept "is not a thing, but an organization of ideas. It is an abstraction, a gestalt, a peculiar pattern of perceptions of self" (p. 32). Self-concept is an abstract construct that provides important insights that can help us better understand why people act the way they do, and to thereby seek to provide conditions that could contribute to human flourishing.

Invitational theorists William Purkey and John Novak (1996) refer to self-concept as both a "moderator variable" (p. 31) and an "anchoring perception" (p. 31). Self-concept is a moderator variable because it clearly links different aspects of human identity, perception, and behavior. It is an anchoring perception because it serves as a defining foundation and touchstone for what people believe and do. As a result, a clearer understanding of self-concept will allow us to better understand others, and to support their wellbeing and flourishing.

Self-concept describes *the beliefs an individual holds about who they are, the foundational beliefs about self that guide and direct their behavior*. In seeking to understand another person, it is important to recognize that their self-concept IS their reality, and, as such, it exercises a shaping impact on their identity and behavior. As Purkey (1970) noted, "The world of the self may appear to the outsider to be subjective and hypothetical, but to the experiencing individual, it has the feeling of absolute reality" (p. 13). Perceptual theory reminds us that every behavior makes sense to the behaver in the moment of behaving. Their behavior is rooted in their perceptions of reality, and of their identity and place in the world. Everything an individual does is ultimately centered on maintaining, protecting, and enhancing their self-concept. If we want to understand others, those who work in the helping professions need to recognize and seek to understand the pivotal nature and profound impact of self-concept.

History and Origins

In this section I seek to describe the historical narrative of self-concept theory, linking it back to some of the key voices and contributions in the development and advancing of the theory. It is important to note that the construct continues to have staying power. All theories emerge in a context, and the history and origins of self-concept theory have played, and continue to play, an important role in invitational theory and practice. This section begins with key voices from the past, focuses on the humanist psychology tradition and the invitational tradition, then highlights a couple of recent emergences and extensions.

1. Key Voices from the Past

In an introduction to self-concept, Purkey (1988) traces self-concept's historical narrative back to Rene Descartes (1644) and Sigmund Freud (1900). Descartes, in *Principles of Philosophy* (1644) introduced a transformation in the history of philosophy when he powerfully demonstrated that existence depends on perception. Similarly, Freud's (1900/1962) study of the functioning of the human mind highlighted the importance of internal mental processing. Both figures played a

key role in the historical shift from a focus on the external and observable to an emphasis on the internal and perceptual.

2. The Humanist Psychology Tradition

Self-concept theory is clearly rooted in the humanist psychology tradition, with a direct link to the landmark work of Carl Rogers and Art Combs. However, the first reference to self-concept appears in an unpublished dissertation by Victor Raimy (1943). As Rogers (1959) notes,

> Raimy (1943) produced a careful and searching definition of the self-concept which was helpful in our thinking. There seemed to be no operational way of defining it at that point. Attitudes toward the self could be measured, however, and Raimy and several others began such research. (p. 201)

A focus on Self-Concept, however, arose in the writings of key figures in the humanist psychology movement. This tradition also serves as the foundation for the emergence of invitational theory.

Carl Rogers. Carl Rogers is a key voice in the field and tradition. A giant in the world of psychology, Rogers transformed the field by introducing a system of helping others built on the importance of the self and the significance of self-perception. As Purkey (1970) notes, "In Rogers theory, the self *is* the central aspect of personality" (p. 6). Rogers' focus on the self-arose from his work as a therapist, where the concept of a person's "real self" consistently emerged as a significant factor. Rogers (1959) states that "It seemed clear from such expressions that the self was an important element in the experience of the client, and that in some odd sense his goal was to become his 'real self'" (p. 201). Rogers' articulation of "the subjective world" underscores the centrality of the self-concept. Rogers (1959) observes that:

> It is my belief in the fundamental predominance of the subjective. Man lives essentially in his own personal and subjective world, and even his most objective functioning, in science, mathematics, and the like, is the result of subjective purpose and subjective choice. (p. 191)

Reflecting back on Rogers' impact on self-concept, Purkey and Schmidt (1990) point out that,

> In Rogers' view, self-concept is the central ingredient in human personality and personal adjustment. Rogers described the self-concept as a social product, developing out of interpersonal relationships and striving for stability and consistency. He maintained that there is a basic human need for positive regard both from oneself and from others. (p. 16)

Art Combs. Combs, a contemporary of Rogers, is the originator of perceptual theory. He is also one of the originators of the term "self-concept," recognizing it as the primary perception that shapes human behavior: the perception of self. Snygg and Combs (1959) note that "The self is the individual's basic frame of reference, the central core, around which the remainder of the perceptual field is organized" (p. 146). All subsequent perceptions and behaviors flow from this central core. Combs continued to explore the concept throughout his career, extending his definition:

> The self-concept includes all the aspects of the perceptual field to which we refer when we say "I" or "me." It is the organization of perceptions about self that seems to the individual to be who he or she is. It is composed of thousands of perceptions that very in clarity, precision, and importance in the person's peculiar economy. Taken together, this organization is called the self-concept. (Combs & Avila, 1985, p. 31)

One of Combs's landmark studies, *The Florida Key* (Combs et al., 1973), directly focuses on self-concept as learner, a fundamental dimension of self-concept that clearly has significant implications for education but is also essential for human growth and flourishing across the human lifespan, something we will return to later in this document. Combs and Avila (1985) observe "When we know how people see themselves, much of their behavior becomes clear to us, and often we can predict with great accuracy what they are likely to do next" (p. 34).

3. The Invitational Tradition – William Purkey and John Novak

The humanist tradition was also the breeding grounds for invitational theory. William Purkey and John Novak both studied under Art Combs, and they continued to advance the work of their predecessors in the humanist tradition. As noted, their development of invitational theory rests firmly on these foundations. As invitational theory advanced, the nature and impact of self-concept played a significant role. Purkey and Novak (1996) noted, "The maintenance, protection, and enhancement of the perceived self is the basic motive behind all human behavior" (p. 25). Novak, Armstrong, and Brown (2014) describe self-concept as the "core of a person's identity" (p. 25). Purkey and Schmidt (1990) provide a helpful definition, defining self-concept,

> as a learned, organized, and active system of subjective beliefs that an individual holds to be true regarding his or her own personal existence. It serves to guide behavior and enables everyone to assume particular roles in life. Rather than initiating activity, self-concept serves as a perceptual filter and guides the direction of behavior. (p. 15)

The self-concept exercises a profound impact on the enacting of invitational theory. Perceptions of *self-as-inviting* and *self-as-invited* are true difference-makers in the inviting process. Whether or not participants perceive themselves as inviting and invited profoundly shapes the behaviors they display.

4. Recent Manifestations and Extensions

Recent Social Science Initiatives. The nature and impact of self-concept continues to exercise a shaping role in helping professions. Recent initiatives have seen a direct focus on mental health, social-and-emotional learning, interpersonal relationships, connectedness and belonging, etc. As these traditions and approaches have developed, individual self-awareness and self-perception have emerged as central elements when it comes to the wellbeing and human flourishing of both individuals and their communities.

Self-Concept Clarity. Self-concept research has also continued to advance, particularly as psychology and other disciplines have recognized that the concept is significant, but also that it is multi-faceted and dynamic. *Self-Concept Clarity* (Campbell, 1990, Campbell et al., 1996, Lodi-Smith & DeMarree, 2017) has emerged as an important consideration, with application in many different spheres. This research emerged in response to the recognition that interpersonal issues often emerged because of a lack of self-concept clarity (Campbell, 1990). Campbell and her colleagues (1996) define self-concept clarity as, "the extent to which the contents of an individual's self-concept (e.g., perceived personal attributes) are clearly and confidently defined, internally consistent, and temporally stable" (p. 141).

Self-Concept Theory Basics

In this section I introduce some of the central elements of Self-Concept theory, providing a foundation for some of the key implications and applications the theory offers. Drawing on existing literature, this section explores the different aspects of the self, considers several self-concept fundamentals, identifies the three basic self-concept assumptions, then concludes with a reflection on self-concept development and change. In the following section the focus will shift to implications and applications.

Aspects of the Self

Global Self-Concept and Situational Self-Concept Sub-Systems. One of the things I have appreciated about self-concept is the powerful reminder that understanding how an individual perceives "self" is more complicated than one might expect. There is certainly a stability to the

self-concept, and this is a key dimension of the theory. But self-concept is also mediated by situations and contexts. For example, as a middle school classroom teacher, I had a couple of very similar interactions with different parents about the inappropriate classroom behavior of their adolescent children. In each case, the parents simply could not accept that their child had behaved in the way I described. As our conversation developed, it became clear that the classroom social dynamics, including their child's perceived status in the classroom culture and the presence of hormones and possible romantic interests in the room, caused their child to behave in the classroom in ways they would never have behaved in their own home. How the children perceived themselves was mostly stable, but it was also affected by context! I have seen this a similar dynamic play out in a wide variety of contexts and demographic groups—with adults as well as adolescents. Self-concept is multi-faceted and contextual. As Purkey and his colleagues (1983) note,

> Most self-concept researchers have tended to focus on global self-concepts rather than on situation-specific self-images, such as self as athlete, self as family member, self as learner, or self as friend. By observing only global self-concept—which is many-faceted and contains diverse, even conflicting sub- selves—investigators have underestimated the importance of those sub-systems. (p. 6)

Three Parts of Self-Concept. Rogers (1959) provides an important foundation, identifying the three fundamental aspects of an individual's self-concept: (1) *The Ideal Self* (the person one earnestly seeks to be when they are at their best), (2*) Self-Image* (how a person presently perceives themselves), and (3) *Self-Esteem* (how much a person likes, accepts, and values themselves).

Two Aspects of the Development of the Self. Lewis (1990) identifies two primary aspects of the development of self, the Existential Self and the Categorical Self. (1) The Existential Self refers to a person's recognition that they exist as a distinct and unique entity, different from the others around them. (2) The Categorical Self describes a person's growing understanding of self-as-object, as an individual with both concrete and distinguishable characteristics (e.g., age, gender, size, eye color, hair color, etc.), as well as unique and defining internal and abstract properties.

Two Key Aspects of Self-Identity. In a similar vein, within the Invitational Tradition, Purkey and Novak (1996) observe that self-identity has two key aspects, (1) Categories (e.g., demographic differences) and (2) Attributes (e.g., unique descriptive characteristics).

Each of these key voices remind us that self-concept is rooted in a wide variety of elements, both visible and invisible. It is imperative for those working in the helping professions to recognize

the complexity of self-concept when seeking to support the people they work with. As we will see, however, the theory does not simply help us recognize the complexity, but also provides way to address and respond to this complexity.

Self-Concept Fundamentals

Why Self-Concept Matters. Self-concept matters because it profoundly shapes perception (how one sees and what one sees) and behavior (what one does). If we want to understand and support others, we need to identify their self-concept. As Novak, Armstrong, and Brown (2014) observe, "If perceptions are people's psychological reality, their most intimate reality is their self-concept, the personal picture they maintain, protect, and enhance of who they are and how they fit into the world" (p. 25). Purkey (1970) notes that "people are constantly trying to behave in a manner which is consistent with the way they view themselves (p. 12). Rogers (1959) reminds us that "when a person's views of himself changes his behavior changes accordingly" (p. 189). Self-concept theory helps us appreciate that understanding self-concept can help us to understand others yet can also position us to support and influence their perceptions and behaviors.

How Self-Concept is Formed. Self-concept is not immutable and unchanging. It is teachable and adaptable. We are not born with a self-concept. The formation of a self-concept begins in the first 2-3 months of life and continues to develop across the human lifespan. Self-concept is formed by (1) a person's life experiences and (2) their interactions with others. Purkey and Novak (1996) suggest that the ingredients of self-concept are primarily social, including both verbal and nonverbal communication. This is one of the reasons self-concept is foundational to invitational theory. Purkey and his colleagues (1983) use the phrase, "signal systems" to describe this social element, noting that:

> During the early years of development, each child is surrounded by countless signal systems. "Inviting" or "disinviting" messages inform the child of his or her abilities, values, and autonomy, or the lack thereof. Every experience the child has and every interpretation he or she makes of that experience influences the development of the child's self-concept, positively or negatively. (p. 52)

Self-Concept as Guidance System. In their recent book on inviting schools, Purkey, Novak, and Fretz (2020) describe self-concept as a guidance system, defining it as "a complex, continuously active system of subjective beliefs about personal experience. It guides behavior and enables each individual to assume particular roles in life" (p. 39). This is a helpful descriptor, as it

serves to remind us that a person's behavior is guided by their self-concept, once again highlighting how imperative it is for those in the helping professions to identify a person's self-concept, and to support them in developing a positive and healthy self-concept. Their future perception and behavior depend on it.

The Importance of Positive Self-Concept. Because a person's behavior is profoundly shaped by their self-concept, it is important that each person have a positive self-concept, one that is realistic about who they are and what they can achieve, but also optimistic about their capacity to be and act, and confident in their own agency and self-determinism. Combs and Avila (1985) observe that people who have a positive self-concept "are likely to behave with confidence, causing others to react in corroborative fashion. People who believe they *can,* are more likely to succeed. The very existence of such feelings about self creates conditions that are likely to make them so" (p. 35). Returning to Purkey, Novak, and Fretz's (2020) focus on invitational schools, the authors point out that:

> Without self-confidence, students easily succumb to apathy, dependency, and a loss of self-control. Too often, the real problem of negative self-esteem is hidden beneath such labels as *unmotivated, unteachable, undisciplined, unable,* or *uninterested*. The classroom result is that students with low self-regard will expect the worst in every situation and will be constantly afraid of saying the wrong word or doing the wrong thing. (p. 41)

Psychology literature is full of examples of the significant impact of negative self-perception and self-concept. The literature is also very clear about the nature and impact of positive perceptions of self.

Self-Concept and Self-Report. The self-concept literature is careful to distinguish the concept from similar terms, such as self-image, self-esteem, self-efficacy, and self-report. There is certainly an overlap between them. But the distinctiveness of self-concept is significant. Theorists have been particularly careful to distinguish between self-concept (a multi-faceted system of perceptions) and self-report (what a person is willing to or chooses to say about themselves). Self-concept is more accurate and reliable than self-report because it is based on observable data, and, as Combs notes (Combs & Avila, 1985), it can "be understood indirectly through a process of inference from some form of observed behavior" (p. 40). The authors (Combs & Avila, 1985) elaborate further, noting:

> The question may be legitimately raised as to why inferences about the self-concept, made from observed behavior, are more acceptable indicators of the self-concept than a person's self-report. First, the inferred self-concept is more accurate on theoretical grounds; it approaches the self-concept as an organization of *perceptions* that *produce* behavior rather than accepting the person's behavior as synonymous with self-perception. Second, it recognizes the existence of distorting factors in the self-report and attempts to eliminate as many of these as practicable. (p. 40)

Three Basic Assumptions

Invitational Theory literature typically introduces self-concept theory by identifying and exploring the three basic assumptions of self-concept: (1) the self-concept is *learned*, (2) the self-concept is *organized*, and (3) the self-concept is *dynamic*. William Purkey's publications (Purkey, 1988; Purkey & Schmidt, 1990) provide a helpful blend of explanation and elaboration for each of the assumptions, which I will include in detail below.

1. The Self-Concept is Learned. As noted earlier, we are not born with a self-concept. It emerges early in life, and it continues to develop throughout our lives, and it is formed by our life experiences and interactions with others. As a result, the self-concept is learned. However, as Purkey and Schmidt observe, "Fortunately, because self-concept is learned, it can be taught" (p. 18). Indeed, this is the grand hope of the self-concept vision: that self-concept, though stable and conservative in nature, is teachable and adaptable.

For each of these three assumptions, I will lean heavily on Purkey's articulation and exploration of implications and corollaries. Purkey and Schmidt (1990) note that the fact that self-concept is learned has a number of important implications:

- Because self-concept is a social product, developed through repeated experiences, it possesses relatively boundless potential for development and actualization.
- Individuals perceived different aspects of themselves at different times and with varying degrees of clarity.
- Any experience which is inconsistent with one's self-concept may be perceived as a threat, and the more of these experiences there are, the more rigid the self-concept becomes to maintain and protect itself.
- Individuals strive to behave in ways that are in keeping with their self-concepts, no matter how helpful or harmful to oneself or others.

- Self-concept usually takes precedence over the physical body. Individuals will often sacrifice physical comfort and safety for self-concept reasons.
- Self-concept continuously guards itself against loss of self-esteem, for it is this loss that produces feelings of anxiety and worthlessness. (p. 16)

2. The Self-Concept is Organized. A person's self-concept is remarkably stable and consistent. It must be, otherwise human identity would shift and change constantly. This stability can be problematic, of course, but it is also a hallmark of human identity. Purkey and Schmidt point out that "Each person maintains countless perceptions regarding one's personal existence, and each perception is orchestrated with all the others. It is generally stable and organized quality that gives consistency to the human personality" (p. 18).

Purkey and Schmidt (1990) note that the organized nature of the self-concept has a number of implications:

- Self-concept requires consistency, stability, and tends to resist change. In fact, if self-concept changed readily, the individual would lack a consistent and dependable personality.
- The more central a particular belief is to one's self-concept, the more resistant one is to changing the belief.
- At the heart of the self-concept is the self-as-doer, the "I," which is distinct from the self-as-object, the various "me's." This allows the person to reflect on past events, analyze present perceptions, and shape future experiences.
- Because basic perceptions of oneself are quite stable, change takes time. A vital attribute of any professional helper is patience.
- Perceived success and failure impact heavily on self-concept. Failure in a highly regarded area lowers evaluations in all other areas as well. Success in a prized area raises evaluation in other seemingly unrelated areas. (pp. 18-19)

3. The Self-Concept is Dynamic. While a person's self-concept is characterized by stability, it is also dynamic. The accumulation of formative life-experiences and interactions with meaningful others have contributed to the formation of everyone's self-concept, the self-concept also has the potential for further development and change.

Purkey (1988) identified a number of key implications of the dynamic nature of the self-concept:

- The world and the things in it are not just perceived; they are perceived in relation to one's self-concept.
- Self-concept development is a continuous process. In a healthy personality there is constant assimilation of new ideas and expulsion of old ideas throughout life.
- Individuals strive to behave in ways that are in keeping with their self-concepts, no matter how helpful or hurtful to oneself or others.
- Self-concept usually takes precedence over the physical body. Individuals will often sacrifice physical comfort and safety for emotional satisfaction.
- Self-concept continuously guards itself against loss of self-esteem, for it is this loss that produces feelings of anxiety.
- If self-concept must constantly defend itself from assault, growth opportunities are limited. (p. 3)

Developing and Changing the Self-Concept

As we have noted, the self-concept is both stable and dynamic. It has a degree of stability, but also has the potential for growth and change. Events and interactions serve to both reinforce the self-concept, but also provide opportunities for the individual to discern the need for growth and change. Herein lies the hope of helping professions: "because self-concept is learned, it can be taught" (Purkey & Schmidt, 1990, p. 18).

The Conservative Nature of Self-Concept. It is important to acknowledge that a person's self-concept is conservative, and resists change. This is part of its stability: our experiences have shaped us, and it is not easy for a person to change their perceptions. In many ways, this is a positive element of human identity: our self-concepts are not fickle and easily changeable. In order for one's self-concept to change, one's experiences or interactions must be deemed significant enough to warrant a change.

Self-Concept Development. Despite its conservative nature, however, the self-concept remains dynamic, even when this may not always appear to be the case! The self-concept is teachable, and change is possible. The self-concept is selective because it seeks to maintain and reinforce itself. If development and change is to occur, the individual must perceive the people and events around them as significant enough to consider a shift in perception and behavior. For family members and helpers, this is an important distinction. If they are positioned to be perceived as

important to the individual, their insights may have influence, particularly if their influence is supported and reinforced by others in the individual's life.

Implications and Applications

Influencing others is always a tricky thing. What if they don't want your influence? What if your influence might cause more harm than good? History contains many tragic examples of the harmful influence individuals can have on others, even when intentions are good.

The inviting tradition, however, has always maintained that it is possible to be a positive force in the lives of others, as long as one prioritizes both the individual's agency and wellbeing. In *Motivation and Personality*, Maslow provides a helpful distinction between being a force for psychopathology or psychotherapy in the lives of others. Maslow (1954) writes,

> Let people realize that every time they threaten someone or humiliate or hurt unnecessarily or dominate or reject another human being, they become forces for the creation of psychopathology, even if these be small forces. Let them recognize that every [person] who is kind, helpful, decent, psychologically democratic, affectionate, and warn, is a psychotherapeutic force, even though a small one. (p. 254)

Clearly, the inviting tradition and the helping professions are directed by an ethical commitment to being a psychotherapeutic force, to being a blessing and contributing to the wellbeing and flourishing of others!

In this important section I identify and explore several key implications (why self-concept matters) and possible applications (what we can do in response). However, I will also elaborate on the concept of "self-concept as learner" (Combs et al., 1973), suggesting that this important element of self-concept theory can be extended beyond its original educational context. If an individual sees themselves as open to growth and learning, they are more likely to grow and learn.

Implications

My experiences with the inviting approach have positioned me to discern a number of important implications when it comes to the self-concept. Because self-concept exists and matters, there are a number of important things for those involved in the helping professions to keep in mind. First, there are multiple aspects to an individua's self-concept. Second, people are always motivated, even if it might appear otherwise. Third, it is important to seek to understand why people behave the way they do, and, in response, fourthly, to provide a context for their growth and flourishing. Fifth, it is important to seek to influence self-concept while it is open to being

formed. Sixth, we must acknowledge that, post-pandemic, western society has become more firmly entrenched, and, as a result, more likely to resist change. Finally, it is imperative that the inviting community be characterized by planting seeds for future change.

1. ***Multiple Aspects of the Self-Concept.*** One of the key insights of self-concept theory is a reminder that there are multiple aspects to the self-concept. Indeed, some may be quite distinct from each other, such as the adolescent who is a strong athlete but a weak student—their self-concept as athlete is likely markedly different from their self-concept as student, and their very different perceptions will have a visible impact on their behaviors on the sports field and in the classroom. In the context of the helping professions, self-concept aspects such as *self-concept as inviting*, *self-concept as invited*, *self-concept as helper*, *self-concept-as helped*, and *self-concept as learner* are all likely to be significant.

2. People Are Always Motivated. This key aspect of perceptual theory is also very relevant for self-concept theory. The myth of the unmotivated person must be unmasked: there is no such thing as an unmotivated person. People are motivated all the time. But they may not be motivated for the things we are motivated for, or for the things we want them to be motivated for. In the context of the helping professions and the inviting tradition, it is imperative that we recognize that people are always motivated, seek to understand what motivates the people around us, and draw on their motivations in our interactions with them and action plans for them. Motivation is a key aspect of an individual's self-concept.

3. Seeking to Understand Why People Behave the Way They Do. Perceptual theory reminds us that all behavior makes sense to the behaver in the moment of behaving, even if it might not make sense mere moments later. But at the time of their behaving, the behavior and individual chose seemed like the best thing to do at the time. This insight gets to the heart of self-concept theory: human behavior is a symptom of perception, and the most important perception when it comes to behavior is the way a person perceives themselves: their self-concept. For those in the helping professions, seeking to understand the relationship between behavior and perception is imperative. As Combs (1969) reminds us, we need to "read behavior backwards" to discern the perceptions that caused the behavior. This must inform our practice.

4. Providing a Context for Growth and Flourishing. One of the hallmarks of the inviting tradition is its confidence in the individual's ability to make responsible and appropriate choices. When obstacles are removed and challenges are identified, people are capable of making good decisions for self and others. Those in the helping professions must prioritize identifying the things that the individual perceives as obstacles, challenges, and threats, and must also seek to discern what the individual values and needs in order to identify a context for growth and flourishing. The way the individual perceives this context matters greatly, and includes safety needs, security needs, physical needs, relational needs, social needs, etc. Of course, this can be easier said than done, but the significance of such a context cannot be overlooked, given its impact on perception and behavior.

5. Influencing Self-Concept While It Is Open to Formation. We have seen that the self-concept is both stable and dynamic. Both the stability of their self-concept and the essentiality and hope implied by dynamism are important elements. We want people to be consistent in their self-concept, and we want them to be open to growing and developing. Self-concept theory reminds us that change is shaped by events and interpersonal relationships. If events and interactions are perceived to be threatening, the individual will resist change. However, if events and relationships are perceived to be supportive, change becomes possible, even in those who appear to resist change the most.

6. The Post-Pandemic Entrenchment Context. One of the things that has struck me, as the pandemic diminishes and moves further into the past, is that the pandemic has changed the way people perceive and behave around others. Being forced to compromise and sacrifice individual rights and freedoms for the sake of the potential health and safety of others has caused many to become more self-focused and less other-oriented on this side of the pandemic. Indeed, in my experience, I have seen many communities become entrenched in their identities and beliefs: more likely to be offended, more likely to lash out when others challenge them, and less capable of listening and considering. This shift is significant when it comes to self-concept. Human beings are change-resistant, and the pandemic has caused many to become even more so. This places an onus of responsibility of those in the helping professions and invitational community when it comes to recognizing and explaining that and why this is the case. We can expect opposition.

7. Planting Seeds for Future Change. Despite increased entrenchment mindsets, and the conservative nature of the self-concept, self-concept theory also reminds us that the self-concept has an inherent capacity for growth and change, even in individuals who seem the most resistant. At the heart of the invitational vision is a commitment to free will and human agency, a dedication to supporting others and providing the conditions that are likely position them to make wise and appropriate choices for self and others. This hope is also important for helping professions and the invitational tradition, who are called to plant seeds in the present in the hopes of growth and change in the future. This is a humbling reality, as it truly is "not about us," but is about the individual and their capacity for self-regulation and positive self- and other-regard.

Applications

Identifying implications provides an important context for the self-concept vision. But it is only a foundation for action. In this section, I seek to identify specific applications of self-concept theory for helping professions and the inviting community. First, it is important to work with the motivational energy that is already present. Second, we must promote positive self-regard. Third, we must pay attention to self-talk and self-pictures. Fourth, we must develop an ecological context that promotes both self- and other-regard. Finally, I will describe a specific plan for action introduced in *Developing Inviting Schools* (Purkey, Novak, and Fretz, 2020).

1. ***Working with the Motivational Energy that is Already Present.*** Perceptual theory reminds us that all people are motivated all the time. They might be motivated differently than we are, or in ways that we don't fully understand, but they are motivated. Professional helpers can leverage existing motivation, using it to support their efforts. This requires that the helper comes alongside the person they are supporting, seeking to get to know them, to understand their self-concept, and to discern what it is that they find motivating. Drawing on this knowledge, they may be positioned to influence the individual's perception and behavior, helping them to find ways to support their wellbeing and flourishing.

2. Promoting Positive Self-Regard. Self-concept theory also clearly demonstrates the power of positive self-perceptions. And this recognition is at the heart of the invitational vision: we seek to create an inviting ethos so that all community members are positioned to see self and others in a positive and optimistic light. Positive self-perceptions are contagious, creating a context for growth and flourishing. Professional helpers, as they come alongside the individuals they are

supporting, seek to identify and maximize existing strengths and abilities, looking for ways to build confidence, self-efficacy, and the potential for self-regulation and agency.

3. Paying Attention to Self-Talk and Self-Pictures. As we have noted, the way an individual perceives themselves profoundly influences their actions and choices. One of the ways people reveal their self-perception is through the ways they talk about themselves, which create an image of how they picture themselves. Professional helpers can discern the way a person perceives self by paying attention to self-talk and self-pictures (Radd, 2006). Radd (2006) notes that "self-talk/self-pictures is the process that allows 'what we say and believe' to be congruent with 'what we think and feel'" (p. 88).

4. Developing an Ecological Context that Promotes Self- and Other-Regard. Over the past decade, psychology literature has provided rich insights into the nature and power of relationships, community, and belonging. Being in a context that prioritizes people, and their wellbeing can have a marked impact on perception and behavior. Purkey and Novak (1996) describe the importance of the "ecological system," recognizing that the ecological context an individual inhabits can foster positive and realistic self-concepts. Professional helpers recognize that the communities that surround individuals profoundly shape perceptions of self and other. If an individual is a part of communities that limit or hinder self- and other-regard, something needs to change. Indeed, professional helpers may be well-positioned to initiate the process of establishing an ecological context that exercises a transformational positive impact.

5. A Specific Plan for Action. Specific action plans can be challenging to identify in an article like this, as each person's situation is unique. Professional helpers and members of the inviting tradition will need to build on their own perceptions and commitments to get to know the story of each individual they seek to support, and tailor specific action plans to their context and circumstances, as well as their specific needs and priorities. However, in *Developing Inviting Schools*, Purkey, Novak, and Fretz (2020) introduced a very specific action plan for drawing on self-concept theory to shift the way an individual perceives and interacts with others:

> Select a student or colleague that you interact with often, who often demonstrates a negative attitude or choice of behavior. During the next few weeks, try to find opportunities to acknowledge some talent, strength, or characteristic about the person that you admire or appreciate. Observe how the person responds to you. What changes do you notice in their behavior or your relationship with that person? (p. 44)

This exercise can be done in almost any context, providing a foundation for changing perceptions and relationships.

Self-Concept as Learner

As noted earlier, each individual's self-concept includes a number of related sub-systems, key aspects of the self-concept that are context specific, yet shape and influence the person's global self-concept. There are myriad aspects that could play a significant role in supporting individual wellbeing and flourishing. Professional helpers need to discern which aspects play a significant role in the lives of the individuals they seek to support.

However, the perceptual theory tradition identified one specific aspect of the self-concept that I believe can be extended well beyond its original context. Art Combs and his colleagues (1973) introduced "Self-concept as learner" as a foundational perception for education. If a student began to perceive *self-as-learner*, their behavior shifted, creating a context for learning that may not have previously existed. This distinction is profound and has allowed teachers and educational leaders to position struggling students to turn things around. A key aspect of this shift is the fact that the student changed his or her own perceptions, leading to a marked change in behavior, which then created the context for many positive school-related experiences.

Extending Self-Concept-As-Learner Beyond the Classroom. Self-Concept as Learner, however, need not be limited to the classroom. Humans are lifelong learners, and learning extends far beyond our time in schools. If an individual perceives "self as learner," their mindset will likely be characterized by an openness to growth and learning, a teachable spirit that is always reflecting and developing. And a person who is always growing and learning is likely to have a healthy positive self-concept that supports their wellbeing and flourishing. As Combs (1973) noted, "a major way the self-concept is altered is through the addition of self-concept as learner."

The Four Factors of Self-Concept-As-Learner. Combs and his colleagues (1973) identified four key factors of self-concept as learner, (1) relating, (2) asserting, (3) investing, and (4) comping. I will primarily draw on the work of John Novak (2002) in defining each of these factors.

1. *Relating.* Relating focuses on the individual's ability to relate positively with others. As Combs and his colleagues (1973) noted, "Relating reflects a basic trust in people" (p. 9). Students who relate well to the people around them, including classmates, teachers, and the school community, are more likely to develop a positive self-concept.

2. Asserting. Asserting focuses on the balance between meeting your own needs and allowing others to have their needs met, too. Novak (2002) notes that in order to define asserting, it is helpful to place it on the continuum between aggression and acquiescence. He writes,

> To aggress is to try to meet your needs while disregarding the needs of others. To acquiesce is to disregard your needs and give in to the needs of others. Assertion, however, is an attempt to meet your needs while still respecting the needs of others. When applies to learning, assertion refers to the degree of control a person has over a situation. Those who can assert themselves do not feel that learning possibilities are out of reach, while those low in asserting have a sense of learned helplessness (Seligman, 1991), a sense that any action is futile. (p. 95)

3. Investing. Investing focuses on the individual's willingness to truly invest themselves in a situation. Combs (1973) suggests that "Investing implies a trust in one's potential. The person who feels good about oneself as a learner is more willing to risk failure or ridicule" (p. 10). Novak (2002) elaborates, writing, "Investing deals with a willingness to try new things, to look at situations in different ways and to explore unexplored ways of thinking. People who demonstrate this trait are rewarded by the enjoyment of the activity itself" (p. 96).

4. Coping. Coping focuses on the individual's ability to navigate the situations they face. Combs (1973) observes that "Coping indicates a trust in one's own academic ability. The student who scores well on coping is interested and involved in what happens in the classroom" (p. 10). Novak (2002) encapsulates this well: "Coping deals with the ability to meet expectations and not be overwhelmed." (p. 96).

Conclusion

In this concluding section I link the insights of self-concept theory back to invitational theory, then begin to explore ways the insights of self-concept theory might extend beyond the invitational community and tradition.

Linking back to Invitational Theory

I believe that an awareness of self-concept can have a powerful impact on invitational theory and practice. In this section, I explore four related issues: (1) the invitational aspect of the self-concept, (2) identifying, exploring, and improving invitational messaging, (3) recognizing that

successful helpers are *magic mirrors*, and (4) exploring the link between invitational theory, self-actualization, and flourishing.

1.The Invitational Aspect of Self-Concept. The self-concept literature reminds us that even though we all have a global self-concept, each of us also has a number of different aspects of our self-concept, unique to our own identities and values. In this context, there is value in applying perceptual language directly to the formation of an invitational self-concept: perceiving *self-concept as invited* or *self-concept as inviting* are likely to have a marked impact on human behavior. *Do we see ourselves as inviting? What causes us to believe this is the case? Do people see themselves as invited? What causes them to feel this way?* Focusing on both perception and behavior are likely to position us to ensure that our inviting intentions are being enacted and experienced by others.

2. Identify, Explore, and Improve Invitational Messaging. We have seen how important the ecological context is for the development of a positive self-concept. In this context, it is essential for communities that purport to be inviting identify, explore, and, where needed, improve their invitational messaging, ensuring that all community members are positioned to develop a healthy and positive self-concept.

3. Successful Helpers are Magic Mirrors. People working in the helping professions navigate a complex calling, seeking to support the wellbeing and flourishing of others without being overly directive or assertive. They are animated by the conviction that, when obstacles are removed and positive conditions are set in place, people have it in themselves to find their own best way. As Purkey and Schmidt (1990) have observed, "Successful helpers are magic mirrors, reflecting back the message that people are able, valuable, and capable and should behave accordingly" (p. 16).

4. Invitational Theory, Self-Actualization, and Flourishing. The authentic application of invitational theory can create the conditions to position individuals to self-actualize and flourish. At the heart of the inviting vision is a vision for both, a commitment to seeing individuals "become themselves" and to thereby grow and flourish. And self-concept is at the heart of this process.

Looking Beyond Invitational Theory

I believe we can and should take the insights of self-concept theory in the context of invitational theory one step further, with a vision for extending the invitational vision beyond the invitational community. In this section I highlight four key insights, (1) the self-concept lies at the

heart of the healing process, (2) self-concept change may be central for positive social change, (3) helping is never in vain, and (4) helping is a relational and ethical imperative.

1. The self-concept lies at the heart of the healing process. At the heart of the helping mindset is a commitment to the wellbeing and flourishing of the people they work with. In many cases, the people they work with are struggling in a variety of ways and need to experience change and healing. Combs and Avila (1985) observe that "The self-concept lies at the very heart of the healing process. A proper knowledge of the self-concept and its dynamics can add immeasurably to understanding people in need of help" (p. 45). However, the value extends beyond simply knowing about self-concept. Combs and Avila add, "It can also provide the guidelines by which people in the helping professions may focus their practice more effectively and efficiently and therefore contribute greater certainty to the health and growth of clients" (p. 45).

2. Self-concept change may be central for affecting positive social change. The people who are supported by professional helpers often experience brokenness and harm, and this often carries over into their families and communities. Fitts (1981) makes a powerful argument that self-concept could play a central role in affecting positive social change, writing:

> I have visualized the issue of self-concept change as central to all of our society. To me, this is the real issue underlying so many others that plague us—crime and delinquency, mental illness, racial conflict, alcoholism, drug abuse, marital misery, and many other people-related problems. In that sense, it is easy for me to view the institutions, agencies, and movements who deal with those problems as essentially concerned with self-concept change. (p. 261-262)

3. Helping is never in vain. Helping is about planting seeds of hope for the future. Helping is not always effective. Sometimes our best intentions and intention-rooted actions do not bear fruit. In such a context it is easy to become disheartened and disillusioned. But this does not negate the value of their good work. It may one day make a difference. As Combs and Avila (1985) observe,

> Every good thing a helper does is forever. It may not be enough, but it is never futile. There is always the further possibility that someone else may contribute something elsewhere, and such cumulative experiences may in time be sufficient to bring about the changes hoped for. (p. 45)

4. Helping is a Relational and Ethical Imperative. Professional helpers seek to support wellbeing and flourishing on both the local and global level. Their immediate and primary focus is on the individuals they work with. But the vision extends beyond those individuals, to their families and communities. Helping is both a relational and ethical imperative. Helpers truly believe in the potential of the people, and do all they can to support their agency, autonomy, and self-efficacy, each of which is firmly rooted in their self-concept. And in so doing, they may position the people they work with to have a transformational impact on the people they interact with. Planting seeds of hope may bloom in unexpected ways.

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How Invitational Education Helped our Professional Learning Community Share Effective Scientific Concepts to Optimize Learners' Success

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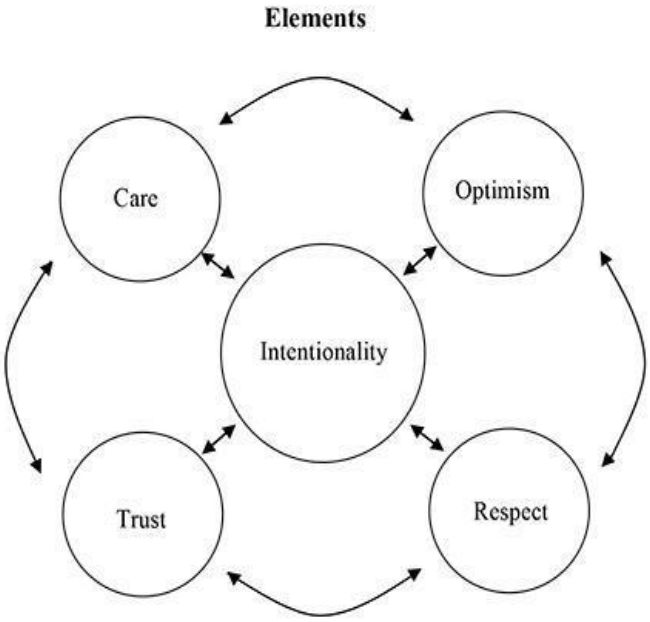
Advocates of Invitational Education theory and practice believe consistent application of an ICORT mindset upon an institution's people, places, policies, programs, and processes (5Ps) can optimize and sustain success for all stakeholders. Given a professional learning community (PLC) is impacted by and also influences all of an institution's 5Ps, this reflective essay describes the benefit of applying IE principles prior to implementation of a PLC seeking to sustain student success and school effectiveness.

Keywords: Invitational Education Theory, I-CORT, Professional Learning Communities, PLC, Student-centered Approaches,

Five factors provide a specific framework believed to contribute to school success or failure (Purkey & Siegel, 2013). The five powerful factors–people, places, policies, programs, and processes (the Five P's) become highly significant due to their separate and combined influence (Purkey & Siegel, 2013). Interdependently, the Five P's provide limitless opportunities for evaluation and development of organizational climate. Grounded in "Invitational Education theory, the Five P's "address the total culture or ecosystem of almost any organization" (Purkey & Siegel, 2013, p. 104). Educators trained to develop their emotional intelligence as part of their professional leadership repertoire can proactively utilize both their cognitive and metacognitive skills (Brackett & Katulak, 2007).

Invitational Education (IE) theory contributes to school effectiveness by the way that its leaders demonstrate care for, and support of, the efforts of others (Halpin, 2003; Purkey & Siegel, 2013). The basic elements of IE theory exhibited by an inviting leader include intentionality, care, optimism, respect, and trust (ICORT). Implementation of IE theory promotes ICORT (Purkey &

Novak, 2016; Anderson 2021) and thereby provides a means of summoning people to realize their relatively boundless potential in all worthwhile human endeavors (Burns & Martin, 2010). An effective professional learning community (PLC), therefore, can be the spearhead in a school's desire to make better possible.



According to William Watson Purkey, Invitational Education (Purkey & Novak, 1984; 1988; Purkey & Stanley, 1991) is a theory of practice designed to create a total school environment that intentionally summons people in schools to realize their relatively boundless potential. Invitational Education (IE) addresses the global nature of schools, the entire gestalt. The purpose of IE is to make schooling a more exciting, satisfying, and enriching experience for everyone involved in the educational process.

Mindful of Invitational Education theory and practice (Purkey & Novak, 2015), Kay R. Pace School of the Arts intentionally seeks to address the needs of all scholars through provision of a variety of wrap-around services and activities. Opportunities are provided for scholars to optimize their talents through the arts available to them through the school's programs. These school programs provide the opportunity for every student to achieve success through dance, drama, instrumental music, vocal music, art, and creative writing. Not only does each scholar have the opportunity to participate in each major, but academic teachers integrate the arts during core

classes. Using fine arts in schools and the application of IE theory helped Kay R. Pace be perceived as an inviting environment. Subsequently, the school achieved one of the highest scores in the state of Georgia.

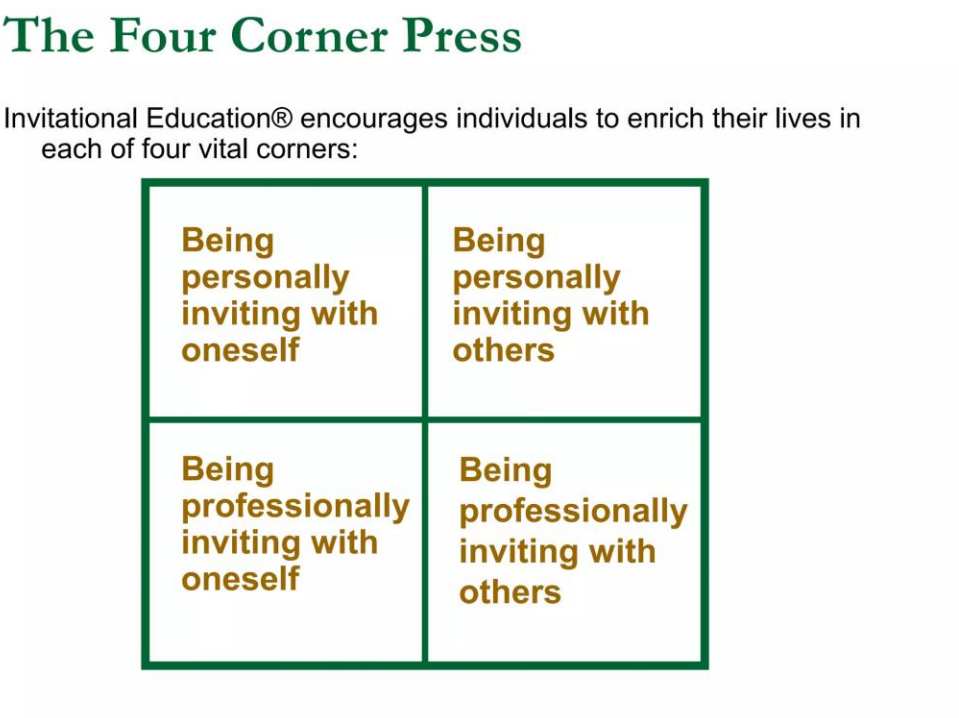
Every stakeholder at Kay R. Pace School of the Arts learns to focus upon intentionally inviting students to do their best and become responsive during daily engagements. An example of this is when members of the Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) come around to each class to celebrate any student who had a birthday during the previous month and gives out "Paw Pops." As a community, the school invites parents to come into the classroom to watch and interact with their scholar as the teacher gives the instructions and encourages active, whole classroom participation in the activities. Further opportunities for volunteering throughout the school are embraced by parents whenever the need arises. During the school's Fall Festival, parents regularly donate food items, candy, or their time, to make the event a success for all stakeholders.

So, let's discuss the starting point for how IE helped stakeholders at Kay R. Pace School of the Arts become more intentional in their invitations: Invitational Education is centered on five assumptions that give it purpose and direction. These assumptions guide our mindset so our interactions with the 5Ps of any institution would be guided by an intentional, caring, optimistic, respectful, and trusting (ICORT) mindset (Anderson, 2021). As a result, this consistent ICORT-driven mindset impacts our interactions as expressed by the four dimensions of the Four Corner Press (Purkey, 1999). The goal of Invitational Education is to encourage educators to enrich their lives in each of four basic dimensions:

1. being personally inviting with oneself,
2. being personally inviting with others,
3. being professionally inviting with oneself, and
4. being professionally inviting with them.

The four dimensions work together to give power to the whole movement or any initiative. When one of the four dimensions may demand special attention, the overall goal is

synchronization to orchestrate these dimensions to seek balance and harmony



The first dimension of the Four Corner Press is being personally inviting with oneself. How many times have you been told that you must like yourself before you are able to like someone else? Embracing this dimension meant that the teachers at Kay R. Pace School of the Arts learned to view themselves as able, valuable and responsible and to be open to experience and living. Educators who adopted the Invitational Education model intentionally sought to reinvent and inspire themselves personally.

In the second dimension, being personally inviting towards others, requires that the feelings, wishes, aspirations of others be considered. Getting to know colleagues on a social basis, sending friendly notes, forming a carpool, remembering birthdays, enjoying hoopla at a faculty party, practicing politeness, celebrating successes are all examples of Invitational Education in action. This can also include showing empathy for others.

Being professionally inviting with oneself is the third dimension. This can take a variety of forms, but it begins with ethical awareness, a clear and efficient perception of situations and oneself. Invitational Education also requires that educators not "rust" on their laurels. Too many times we see in the news that a teacher has lacked their ethical awareness and has done something that has harmed either a student, another colleague, or out in the community and has brought shame

to the profession. With IAIE, we encouraged transparency during training so that teachers and staff can learn ethical awareness through their profession and with each other.

The fourth dimension of Invitational Education, which is arguably most important to students and parents, is being professionally inviting towards others. When being professionally inviting with others one must treat people as valuable individuals, acting carefully, ethically and respectfully. This easily generalizes to all People, Places, Policies, Programs, and Processes (5 Ps).

Focusing upon the 5 P's, the first: People, include more than the faculty and staff working as a school family. Several schools have team building programs that include more than the teachers. Staff can include janitorial staff, secretaries, and cafeteria staff, as well as administrators.

Places include the environment of the school grounds. This is not limited to just the classroom, but the play area, restrooms, hallways, and cafeteria. Think also of displays that celebrate student accomplishments or identify how things are done well at the school.

Policies must be clearly known and effectively communicated. Changes to any policy should help stakeholders feel empowered. At Kay R. Pace School of the Arts families are kept informed through newsletters, bulletins, phone calls and direct meetings. Communication is more than discussing their learner's attendance, grading, promotion, or discipline. A lack of clarity regarding active or changing policies can be perceived as disempowering rather than intentionally inviting.

When it comes to educational programming, the involvement of parents is strongly encouraged. At Kay R. Pace School of the Arts, we found this helps to create safer schools, better curriculum, and more effective community outreach, wellness, and enrichment opportunities for all stakeholders.

Finally, processes are how things are done in any organization or institution. Schools are not an exception to this reality. The key is to be effective rather than efficient with people (Covery, 1990). At Kay R. Pace School of the Arts, faculty and staff know that activities and procedures should be designed to honor and include everyone. Ideas, suggestions, and concerns are welcomed in this evolving, Inviting School. The school community's ICORT mindset consistently exhibited through engagement with all the 5Ps is what allows effective participation in a professional learning community that seeks to optimize student learning and thereby exemplifies how Invitational Education makes it a better institution. So how do we exhibit an ICORT mindset?

It is now recognized that intentionality, care, optimism, respect, and trust (I-CORT) should be the Invitational Education leader's consistent mindset (Anderson, 2019, 2021) to exhibit the personally and professionally inviting behaviors (Purkey & Novak, 2016) that promote "increased learning outcomes and personal growth" (Shaw, Siegel, & Schoenlein, 2013, p. 33). I-CORT must be evident throughout the five powerful factors: people, places, policies, programs, and processes, which Purkey and Siegel called the "five P's" (p. 104). Intentionality is the philosophy that the quality of mental states, including thoughts, beliefs, desires, and hopes, exists in one's being and is directed towards some object or state of affairs. teacher and instructional leadership preparation programs should explicitly implement invitational leadership theory within their curriculum. Another implication for future practice can be derived from the invitational leadership's assumption of intentionality. Citing Stillion and Siegel's recommendation for all leaders becoming "well-versed in the issue of intentionality" (2005, p. 9), it is reasonable to advance the definition presented by Day, et. al., (2001), whereby intentionality is "a decision to purposely act in a certain way, to achieve and carry out a set goal" (p.34). Our schools' stakeholders now embrace that an invitation is additionally defined as an intentional act designed to offer something propitious for consideration.

From an IE theory perspective, the exhibition of intentional care is foundational. What might it look like in practice? Stakeholders at Kay R. Pace School of the Arts are expected to demonstrate concern by sharing warmth, empathy, positive regard, and interest in others, specifically with the intention of helping them reach their potential.

Educators know the value of optimism. Optimism is more than positive thinking; it's a way to combat learned helplessness that is created when one approaches a challenge with a defeated mindset. Realistic optimism should be the educator's goal. Dweck's growth mindset emphasizes optimism. Teaching students about the concept of a growth mindset can be highly beneficial and is not limited by age. In fact, Dweck (2006) suggests it can be introduced to students at a young age and should ideally be integrated into the entire educational experience. It's never too early to start teaching children about the concept of a growth mindset. An example of growth mindset creating optimism is when a student has a learning disability and is struggling with a concept or skill. A beneficial approach for the student's needs may be scaffolding (Bruner, 1979) to first accomplish a simpler task. Once the student successfully accomplishes this task, he will have an opportunity to have experience growth and be more optimistic towards the next task. From

experience, we know a novice violin student learning how to play, benefits from the fingerboard being labeled with finger placements. After successful learning and practice, the student will start to remove the labels and play the instrument without this visual aid.

Thinking aloud also teaches optimism in the classroom. The teacher can model situations, demonstrating optimistic thinking in action. Students or individuals can learn to be aware of the positive things in their lives. Acting out scenarios can help students understand that even though they face problems and obstacles, there is always something good to find and build upon. Simply stated, optimism helps people succeed.

Inviting schools expect the exhibition of mutual respect. People are valued as able, valuable, responsible, and thereby treated accordingly. An indispensable element in any successful school is shared responsibility based on mutual respect. This respect is manifested in the appropriate behaviors exhibited by everyone in the school and through its places, policies, programs and processes. Whenever a school or its teachers fail to promote mutual respect with their students' parents, students are more likely to exhibit disrespect as well. When a school and its teachers are truly an Inviting environment, parents will show respect in kind, thereby helping their learners want to exhibit respect for their teachers. However, whenever a teacher is intentionally or perhaps even unintentionally disinviting to students or their parents, the lack of respect results in less successful relationships in the future. Being the adult in the room, the inviting teacher wants to always model respectful behavior.

Trust in a relationship is how education thrives through cooperative, collaborative activities. The process is valued as much as the product. Positive relationships with students help create a safe learning environment within the classroom. In terms of academic learning, trust significantly promotes students' acquisition of knowledge. Trust in the academic educational process goes beyond gaining knowledge; it also aims to help students become more confident. Like all people, students need the feeling of trust from the teachers. If students do not feel comfortable, they will not be able to safely discuss their needs. Trust is one of the most important parts of a teacher-student relationship.

This is also true for every stakeholder involved with the school. Parents need to feel trust in their children's teachers, administrators, and school staff. Whenever parents trust their child's teacher, they are more likely to feel comfortable and confident leaving their child in the care of the

school. This is why the International Alliance for Invitational Education (IAIE) celebrates inviting schools!

Invitational Education (IE) recognizes the interdependence of human beings. Proponents of IE recognize that demanding of others without involving them in the process is a lost cause. Even if in the short-term the effort to control people is successful, the energy expended is usually disproportionate to what is accomplished. Each individual should be embraced as the ultimate authority on his or her personal journey. Through an intentionally inviting environment, each person will find the best ways of being, becoming, and achieving her or his human potential.

So, implementation of IE theory and practice allowed Kay R. Pace School of the Arts to embrace the value of a professional learning community (PLC) that focuses upon reducing learning overload and achieving the "learning for all" mission. Creation of this type of PLC involves collaboration, shared responsibility, and a commitment to applying scientific concepts and psychological tools. An educator is a potential member of the school's PLC. Therefore, as a developing servant leader and effective teacher, you are invited to access, review, and add the following strategies to your developing "pedagogical toolbox:"

- Ensure the school has a Clear Mission and Vision. Clearly define the mission and vision of the school regarding "learning for all." Emphasize the importance of creating an inclusive and supportive learning environment.
- Help strengthen, or form, a Collaborative PLC. Bring together teachers, administrators, psychologists, and other relevant staff to form a collaborative PLC. Foster a culture of openness, trust, and shared responsibility within the PLC.
- Offer to provide or participate in Professional Development. Provide ongoing professional development opportunities for educators to learn about scientific concepts and psychological tools related to reducing learning overload. Seek out experts or arrange workshops to enhance the understanding of cognitive science and psychology in education.
- Utilize Data-Driven Decision Making. Collect and analyze data related to student learning, engagement, and well-being. Use data to identify areas where learning overload may be occurring and tailor interventions accordingly.

- As a valuable member of the school's PLC, encourage implementation of Evidence-Based Practices. Model the implementation of evidence-based teaching strategies that align with scientific principles of learning and memory. Share research findings and encourage educators to adapt their instructional methods based on the latest evidence.
- Help to create Support Systems. Establish support systems for both students and teachers. Provide resources for teachers to manage their own workload and stress, fostering a positive environment for both educators and students.
- Inspire utilization of Student-Centered approaches. Remember what you cherished as a student! Model a shift towards student-centered learning approaches that allow for individualized instruction. Use psychological tools such as positive reinforcement, growth mindset interventions, and mindfulness practices to enhance student well-being.
- Willingly, initiate collaboration with Experts. Collaborate with psychologists, educational researchers, and other experts to gain insights into effective strategies for reducing learning overload. Create partnerships with local universities or research institutions for ongoing support and collaboration.
- Model Parent and Community Involvement. Involve parents and the community in the mission to reduce learning overload. Educate parents on the importance of a balanced approach to education and seek their support in promoting student well-being.
- Practice continuous Reflection and Self-Improvement. Foster a culture of continuous reflection and improvement within the PLC. Regularly assess the effectiveness of implemented strategies and adjust them based on feedback and outcomes.

Research by Comer (1998) and Reeves (2008), reaffirmed the earlier findings by Edmonds (1979) and Lezotte (1991) that the basic beliefs of effective schools are important for school improvement. The Effective Schools Model promotes district-wide, systemic restructuring that provides continuous improvement, thereby ensuring every child has access to a quality education and an equal educational opportunity. The seven correlates, which embrace and enrich an effective PLC, have been shown to provide schools with a comprehensive framework for identifying,

categorizing, and solving the problems confronting schools. Kay R. Pace School of the Arts demonstrates that a relevant curriculum and an intentionally inviting school climate makes a PLC more effective. Again, you are intentionally invited to access, review, and add the strategies listed above to your developing "pedagogical toolbox" and become part of your school's improvement plan through Invitational Education theory and practice.

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JITP Guidelines for Author Submissions

The Journal for Invitational Theory and Practice (JITP) (ISSN-1060-6041) publishes once a year and promotes the tenets of invitational theory and practice, self-concept theory, and perceptual psychology. First published in 1992, the JITP is currently indexed in the ERIC and EBSCO databases.

The JITP seeks to publish articles under two priorities: research and practice. First, manuscripts are encouraged that report research that examines and expands the theory and practice of invitational learning and development, investigates the efficacy of invitational practices, relates invitational theory to other theories of human development and behavior, or focuses on theories that are compatible with invitational theory and practice. Second, manuscripts will be considered that are more focused on the practice of invitational theory. These articles are less data-oriented and could describe authors' attempts to apply invitational theory to a variety of settings or activities related to invitational theory. The editorial board will also consider book reviews of professional books related to invitational or other related theories.

The JITP accepts articles for submission year-round. However, the ideal submission deadline for each issue is October 1st. The Journal uses a blind peer review of articles with final publication decisions made by the editor. Upon publication, authors will receive an electronic copy of the JITP. Manuscripts submitted to or under consideration for publication by other journals are not accepted. Authors must follow specific guidelines when submitting manuscripts for publication consideration:

1. Prepare manuscripts in APA style. Refer to the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association, 7th Edition (2019).
2. Submit manuscripts as email attachments to: ucan@rcn.com
    a. All submissions will be acknowledged by return email to the originating email address.
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3. Include your home and business phone numbers.
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    a. Please remove embedded comments, tracked changes, and hidden personal data in the file.
5. Submit two copies of the manuscript – one with your identifying information and one without your identifying information
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6. Limit manuscripts to less than 10,000 words, double spaced (including references and quotations)
    a. Use Times New Roman, 12-point font, with one-inch margins on each side, top, and bottom.
7. Format (APA, 2019) the cover page with the author's or authors' names, institutional affiliation(s), and title of the manuscript.
8. On the second page, include the title and an abstract of 150 - 250 words.
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