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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

Editorial

Continuing the legacy of our founders, the 2022 Journal of Invitational Theory and Practice (JITP) promotes the tenets of Invitational Education (IE). Herein you will find important research, an essay reminding us to be mindful of Perceptual Theory, which is one of Invitational Education's theoretical foundations; and an excerpt from Dr. Asbill's book. Kate's expressed optimism is more apropos and needed than ever.

School reform requires systemic change: A metamorphosis, based on systemic analysis of the people, places, policies, programs, and processes (the Five Ps). This structural analysis of school climate discerns whether any part of the whole is disinviting (Purkey & Siegel, 2013). The research and documented practices within the 2022 JITP exhibit how the interdependent IE framework addresses "the total culture or ecosystem of almost any organization" (Purkey and Siegel, 2013, p. 104). While there is no quick fix for educational problems, the IE framework encourages ongoing vigilance before affirming sustained change (Purkey & Siegel, 2013; Strahan & Purkey, 1992). Vigilance is required because changing how a school operates requires transforming its people (Asbill, 1994).

During 2023, be resolute in your endeavor to model and nurture an intentionally inviting stance. We must intentionally promote IE theory and practice in our demonstrated efforts to encourage the learning for all mission. We must lead others in the "direction and purpose for all Invitational thought and action" (Purkey & Novak, 2016, p 11). Crucially, we must willingly teach others to extend intentional invitations. As proponents of IE theory, we know others are better served through empowering opportunities for achieving one's human potential. Therefore, encourage dialogue that promotes critical thinking and open-mindedness. Willingly reject any exhibition of contempt, which merely destroys motivation and incites further division. As champions of IE theory and practices we must always promote intentionality, care, optimism, respect, and trust (I-CORT) in all our educational, leadership, and interpersonal opportunities.

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: JITPeditor@invitationaleducation.net or 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 2022 Journal of Invitational Theory and Practice

Examining Ethical Tensions and the Pursuit of Care Through an Invitational Lens

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Ethics are aspirational goals representing the maximum or ideal standards set by the profession, practiced through one's professional behavior and interactions (Remley & Herlihy, 2016). This study explored teachers' meaning making of ethical practice by delineating how participants deliberated and came to make sense of what, why, and how, they made educational decisions. Findings revealed a complex interplay characterized by 1) personal morality clashing with professional norms; 2) conflicts between individualized student benefits versus the larger community's needs; and 3) students' short-term versus long-term development. Conclusions affirm the influence of intentional care and suggest meaning making may begin in an internalized space framed by the participant's personal sense of morality but then be mitigated by external organizational and societal pressures that both inform and challenge ethical choices and professional practices.
Keywords: Ethical decision-making; Ethical dilemmas; Invitational Education; Teacher Preparation; Teachers' Ethical knowledge; Teaching

Introduction

Although values and ethics are frequently used interchangeably, the two terms are not identical. Values pertains to beliefs and attitudes that provide direction to everyday living, whereas ethics pertains to the beliefs we hold about what constitutes right conduct. Ethics are moral principles adopted by an individual or group to provide rules for right conduct. As noted by Remley and Herlihy (2016), ethics are aspirational goals representing the maximum or ideal standards set by the profession, practiced through your professional behavior and interactions.

By contrast, laws represent the body of rules governing the affairs of people within a community, state, or country. Laws define the minimum standards society will tolerate, which are enforced by the government. For example. we can agree that a minimum standard is the legal obligation required of educators or mental health professionals to report suspected child abuse. Yet, the law can further encourage working toward changing societal attitudes to prevent child abuse rather than only reporting it.

Although professional actions are related to ethical behavior, it is possible to act unprofessionally and still not act unethically. Community standards often establish the ultimate legal criteria by determining or defining what is considered reasonable behavior. Reasonableness can be defined as the care that is ordinarily exercised by others practicing within the same specialty within the professional community.

Perhaps understanding the potential divide between community ethics compared professional ethics requires conceptualizing professional ethics by contrasting mandatory ethics with aspirational ethics. We should agree that mandatory ethics describe a level of ethical functioning based on one's compliance with minimal standards and acknowledgement of the basic tenets clarifying what we must do compared to must never do. The focus of mandatory ethics is on behavioral rules. By contrast, aspirational ethics describe the highest standards of thinking and conduct, requiring one to do more than simply meet the letter of the ethics code. Aspirational ethics

entail embracing the spirit behind the code and the principles upon which the code of conduct and behavior ethical rests.

While it is essential to place principles before personalities, the ethical professional should seek to integrate virtue ethics and principled ethics to reach better ethical decisions and policies. Let's take this moment to differentiate between principled ethics and virtue ethics. We should agree that principled ethics are a set of obligations and a method that focuses on moral issues with the goals of solving a particular dilemma or set of dilemmas and establishing a framework to guide future ethical thinking and behavior (Meara, Schmidt, & Day, 1996).

By contrast, virtue ethics focus upon the professional's character traits and nonobligatory ideals to which she or he aspires rather than on solving specific ethical dilemmas. While reflection upon principled ethics begs the question, 'Is this unethical?' Reflection from the pursuit of virtue ethics would question whether one is doing what is best for his or her followers, client, or student. Crucially, virtue ethics requires the professional to be conscious of ethical behavior. Therefore, the virtuous professional would deem it unethical to use approaches or techniques that might not result in the greatest benefit to her or his followers, client, or student or to use any techniques to which he or she has not been thoroughly trained, although their use might not be prohibited in practice.

Therefore, virtue ethics focus upon ideals rather than obligations and on the character of the professional rather than on the action itself. Thus, principles before personalities. Five characteristics of virtuous professionals were described by Meara et al (1996). These were:

- Virtuous agents are motivated to do what is right because they judge it to be right, not just because they feel obligated or fear the consequences.
- Virtuous agents rely on vision and discernment, which involve sensitivity, judgment, and understanding that lead to decisive action.
- Virtuous agents have compassion and are sensitive to the suffering of others. They are able to take actions to reduce their clients' pain.
- Virtuous agents are self-aware. They know how their assumptions, convictions, and biases are likely to affect their interactions with others.
- Virtuous agents relate to and understand the mores of their community and the importance of community in moral decision making, policy setting, and character development. They understand the ideals and expectations of their community.

Educators benefit in a number of ways from working together to identify a clear, shared vision, developing a collaborative culture focusing on learning, engaging in collective inquiry, remaining action oriented, committing to continuous improvement, and being results oriented (Dufour et al., 2008). Greater student success is possible when educators utilize an intentionally caring, optimistic, respectful, and trusting (ICORT) mindset. Through intentional invitations for vibrant discussions and active interactions an ICORT-driven educator systemically addresses institutional needs through an inventory of the people, places, policies, programs, and processes (5-Ps) that influence the potential for success. This intentional desire promotes collaboration, exhibits critical, higher order thinking skills (HOTS), and analyzes accessible, reliable data (Anderson, 2019). In this regard, the practitioner of Invitational Education acts as a virtuous agent.

Effective accountability requirements hastened the emergence of professional learning communities (PLC). Marzano and Waters (2009) believe, a PLC "suggests a group of people sharing and critically interrogating their practice in an ongoing, reflective, collaborative, inclusive, learning oriented, growth-promoting way, operating as a collective enterprise" (p. 56). To be successful, the PLC requires "reculturing the traditional culture of schools and districts" (Dufour et al., 2008, p. 6). This shift needs to be systemic and not merely structural, embedding sustained improvements in "the assumptions, beliefs, values, expectations, and habits that constitute the norm for that organization" (p. 90).

The improvement to the collaborative learning culture begins with recognizing promotion of student learning in schools that are loosely coupled by design must be tightly coupled in relation to non-negotiable goals (NNGs). Beginning with district leadership, a culture based on "defined autonomy" (Marzano & Waters, 2010, p. 8) communicates NNGs to both the internal and external stakeholders. Establishment of non-negotiable goals (NNGs) are a product of earlier collaboration. Intentional invitations promote staff empowerment (Purkey & Novak, 2016). Determination to collaborate, time to meet, willingness to ask earnest questions, creation of an action plan, and always meeting with an agenda, promotes collaborative communication aligned to the established NNGs. Otherwise, change can be either slow, inconsistent, or nonexistent.

There is little doubt that teachers face decisions that can significantly affect students' confidence, motivation, and learning but as Barrett, Casey, Visser, and Headley (2012) posited, the teaching profession has lacked a set of guidelines to provide teachers with clarity around decisions with ethical implications. They argued that professional ethics serve three essential purposes: to ensure high professional standards, to protect students, and to guide teachers in their decision-making (Barrett et al., 2012).

Many agree that teaching is demanding work (Loewenberg Ball & Forzani, 2009; Santoro, 2011), in part because it draws upon human dispositions and includes a moral set of responsibilities including caring for students (Goodlad, Soder, & Sirotnik; 1990). Teachers have a responsibility to make moral and ethical decisions all the time. They must consider the needs of students from diverse backgrounds, be fair, consistent, and use their professional authority while seeing past teachers' own self-interests. "There is more than one available course of action, and the individual teacher makes a choice of what she considers the right course of action in the circumstances" (Heilbronn, 2010, p. 95).

Given the nature of these demands, ethics and teaching are naturally enmeshed (Campbell, 2008a; Cummings, Harlow, and Maddux, 2007). The expectations associated with being an ethical teacher often seem simple at first, however many novice teachers quickly identify a host of situations in which right and wrong, good, and evil, ought and ought not to, are far more complicated that initially perceived and tend to reside in the gray areas (Hutchings, 2016; Mahony, 2009). The ethical decisions that teachers must make on a daily or even hourly basis are often far from clear-cut. Teachers often experience circumstances that evoke mixed feelings and dilemmas regarding ethical decisions, and their reasoning for the choices they make regarding these dilemmas are often unclear (Mezirow, 2000; Jersild, 1965). When parents or other teachers question teachers' decisions, or when these choices go against their own personal moral compass of what they consider the right course of action based on the circumstances it can be complicated and demoralizing (Heilbronn, 2008). This study sought to uncover the ways in which teachers make meaning of the tangled incidents they describe, in which they identified ethical issues at play, and, how they chose to navigate these decisions and situations. The research question asked: In what ways do teachers make meaning of and describe enacting professional ethics?

Theoretical background

There are key ethical paradigms and their contributors including alternatives to principle-based ethics and care-based ethics that are germane to this study. First, the differences between personal morality versus professional ethics, laws, policies and the ethical theories of justice, care, cultural care, and phrenetic aspects of teachers' professional ethics must be taken into consideration.

Morality versus Ethics

Often *ethics* and *morals* are used synonymously. According to Hazard (1985) morals refer to "the notions of right and wrong that guide us individually and subjectively in our daily existence" (p. 451). By contrast, ethics are norms shared by a group "on the basis of mutual and usually reciprocal recognition" (Hazard, 1985, p. 453). For the purposes of this study, the distinction between morality and ethics is a critical one, given they are serious, theorized concepts.

Morality refers to how people choose to live their life, what principles to abide by for actions that stem from a set of beliefs from a certain culture, specific religion, or philosophical orientation, whereby personal interpretations of what is right and wrong are strongly influenced by the factors mentioned herein. Values about honor and morality can vary between individuals. Personal morality, referring to personal principles, values, and beliefs derived from one's life experiences that are subjective, can be cultural or religious and may or may not align with community mores (e.g., Campbell, 1993; Jackson, Boostrom, & Hansen,1993; Oser, 1989).

By contrast, ethics tend to be agreed-upon statements regarding behavior and activity used to determine what is right and wrong within a more specific professional realm and to guide behavior (i.e., formal ethics within law, counseling, clergy, medicine, and education). Philosophers have positioned ethics as the study and development of theories that encompass the general nature of moral principles (e.g., Socrates, Aristotle, Kant, Newton). This can include aspects of universal notions of fairness, a sense of right and wrong, or what ought to be done in any given situation. Lowenstein (2008) defined ethics as "the attempt to think critically about what is right and what is wrong, what is good and what is bad, in human conduct" or simply stated how people should conduct themselves (p. 43).

With regard specifically to education, Husu (2001) defined ethics as the "norms, values, and principles that should govern the conduct of educational professionals" (p. 68). Professional ethics signify the professional ethical standards that assist practitioners within situational and systemic contexts that acknowledge dilemmas in choosing the best course of action (Berlak & Berlak, 1981; Fenstermacher, 1990; Jackson et al.,1993; Hutchings, 2016; Strike, 1990).

Laws, Regulations and Policies

Laws and regulations, or policies, for the purposes of this study, refer to the specific articulated rules, policies, statutes, and judicial guidelines that teachers are required to follow. As opposed to moral issues that focus on how people live their lives, the regulatory position takes a rules-based approach to right and wrong, determined by others as opposed to the individual. Hazard (1985) characterized laws as "the norms that ordinarily are written and expressed as generalizations" (p. 448). Teachers are beholden to laws, regulations, and policies that originate from their core professional responsibilities, including promoting and protecting students' safety, fostering growth and development, and facilitating students' learning. As Darling-Hammond

(1985) wrote, "It is unethical for a teacher to conform to prescribed practices that are harmful to children. Yet that is what teachers are required to do by policies that are pedagogically inappropriate for some or all of their pupils" (p. 213). Therein lies the essence of the ethical struggle teachers often encounter.

Moral Development and the Justice Perspective

Relevant to this study is the work that key researchers (e.g., Hoffman, 1982; Kohlberg, 1981, 1984; Rest, 1983) have done in investigating moral development, or the changes in understandings of morality over a life span. Historically, cognitive-based perspectives have dominated the fields of psychology and were coopeted to explain teachers perceived moral responsibilities and decisions. For example, Kohlberg (1981, 1984) claimed that moral development progressed through six stages and three levels (e.g., two stages per level). Kohlberg's theory of development in the most evolved level proposed that people can follow self-chosen ethical standards of behavior, engaging in questioning rules that violate some people's rights, and considering the needs of all members of a community. Kohlberg considered this phase the time when people have (a) the capacity to consider laws of a society, (b) can consider if and how to uphold or violate principles of justice, and (c) makes decisions about morality that are based on principles that appeal to a value of the common good rather than simply self-benefit. In this stage, a distinction is made between being legally right and morally right. Further, based on Kohlberg's work, Rest (1975) developed the Defining Issues Test (DIT) and applied it specifically to teachers with the aim of determining their individual moral reasoning levels. Only later did care based perspectives take root espousing the idea that as human's our decisions are guided primarily by the knowledge of each other through relationships. This care-based approach to ethical practice contrasted Kohlberg's (1981) focuses on ethics as a matter of justice and fairness in which the assumption is made that people follow universal rules.

The Ethics of Care

Gilligan's (1982) theory claimed that women tend to emphasize compassion, caring, empathy, and relationships over more abstract concepts such as justice in relation to moral understandings. Gilligan's research rejected Kohlberg's (1981, 1984) work established a set of universal ethical principles. Her work (1982) focused on the ways in which being responsive to others' needs often emerges as more important than the concepts of *justice* and *fairness*. Gilligan uncovered incidents in which people described prioritizing care for others over any sense of universal rules about what is right and wrong ethical practice. Gilligan's contributions to psychology and the field's understandings of ethics weighed heavily in this study; her approach and line of thinking resonated as a way to start to understand teachers' ethical choices and decisions.

In addition, Noddings' influential "ethics of care" (1984, 2012) suggested that all ethical action centers on interpersonal relationships helped examine the situated contexts of schools and classrooms, where relationships between teachers and student are often at the center of the learning experience. For Noddings, teaching is relational work, something that is inherent in the professional role, a part of all key aspects of instructions such as planning curriculum, implementing lessons, or assessing student work. Nodding's and Gilligan's framing of ethics is germane to this examination of how teachers' make meaning of professional practice in education. Nodding's suggestion that all ethical action centers on interpersonal relationships helped examine

the situated contexts of schools and classrooms, where relationships between teachers and students are often at the center of the learning experience.

Cultural Care

Cultural care is a theory of practice. It is defined as verbal or nonverbal gestures that display a person's genuine interest in another person's social, emotional, mental, and physical well-being, while simultaneously recognizing and acknowledging race and culture as a significant part of a person's identity. As noted in the graphic below, cultural care includes respecting, valuing, and embracing culture from a value- and strengths-based perspective (Allen & FitzGerald, 2017, p 8).

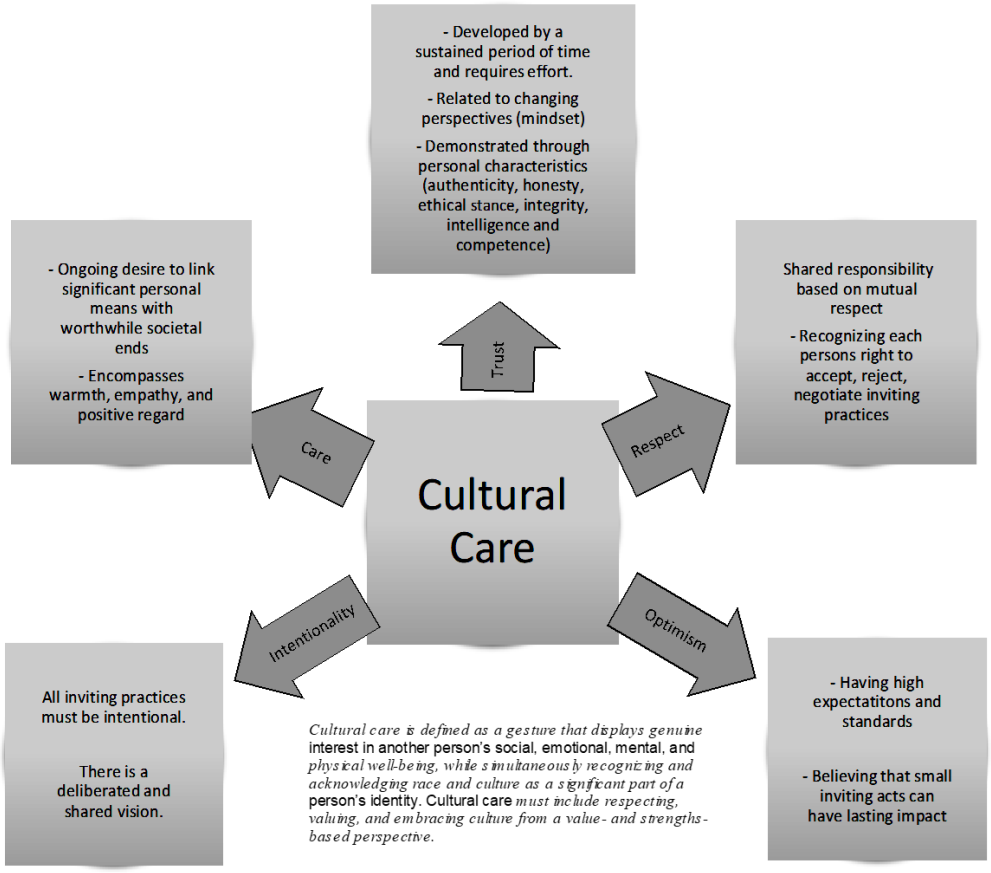


Figure 1. Elements of invitational education (I-CORT) with cultural care as a driver. Adapted from Fundamentals of Invitational Education (2nd ed.), by W.W. Purkey & J.M. Novak, 2016, Greensboro, NC: International Alliance for Invitational Education.

Intentionality care, optimism, respect, and trust (ICORT) are assumptions of Invitational Education theory and practice (Purkey & Novak, 2016; Anderson, 2019)

Moral Dimensions of Teaching

There are also an abundance of literature exploring the moral dimensions or teaching. Campbell's (2008b) work has provided one of the most compelling literature reviews available to scholars interested in the moral dimensions of teaching. She claimed that besides John Dewey (1903) and a few other scholars, many teacher researchers failed on two fronts: (a) to address the moral aspects of teaching, and (b) to provide any nuanced examination of the ethical nature of

teacher professionalism (2008a). Instead, most scholars focused on accountability, assessment, and measurement of character-building curricular initiatives designed to address character education. In more recent years, Campbell showed that many in the field of education focused solely on the enactment of moral *virtues* in teaching (e.g., Bergem, 1993; Clark, 1990; Tom, 1980).

In historical terms, Campbell (2008a) assessed the landscape of teachers and chronicled the development of how authority, power, and morality began to make its way into the discourse. She claimed that "the field of professional ethics in teaching is situated within a wider concern for the moral dimensions of teaching and schooling" (Campbell, 2008a, p. 358). The literature suggests that professional ethics are more than a list of behaviors teachers should avoid, and yet they are often articulated in codes of conduct by district leaders or principles espoused by teachers' unions (Campbell, 2000). It would be beneficial to expand upon the few existing codes of professional ethics to include a set of decision rules for teachers to determine the best course of action when one or more underlying principles are in conflict.

Ethical Codes

Many professions such as low, medicine, nursing, dentistry, accounting, and counseling have established codes of ethics to articulate the responsibilities of the profession and have formed review boards that monitor and enforce codes of professional ethics (Webb, 2007). In teaching, while there has been some progress in developing codes of ethics, one could argue that there is still a vast lack of shared ethical understandings. When asked on an impromptu basis, often pre-service teachers describe ethical responsibilities along the lines of vague notions of "what we should do" ensuring or fighting for their students' learning needs, instilling democratic practice in class, and being fair with students during their day-to-day professional challenges. Such descriptions are consistent with the National Education Association (NEA) Preamble and Principle I *Commitment to the Student* (1975). In 1975, the Representative Assembly of the NEA adopted a Code of Ethics of the Education Profession. Similarly, in 1994 the advisory board for the Association of American Educators (AAE) developed a code of ethics for educators that was built to uphold the highest ethical standards to protect the rights of both students and teachers. While the intension was not to replace the NEA code of ethics, the AAE expanded upon the commitments to the students and the profession. This was a clear attempt to determine the rules of engagement for teachers, clarifying the behaviors and the practices that the teaching profession can, and should, impose on itself.

Over the last 40 years since these initial ethical codes were developed, however, the world has increased in complexity and policy changes prompted the need for more specific guidelines. For example, the inclusion of uniquely abled learners into mainstream classrooms coincided with the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) developing a specific code of ethics for special educators. The CEC code stated, "Special education professionals are committed to developing the highest education and quality of life potential of individuals with exceptionalities" (2003, p. 1). Two years later, the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) produced a Code of ethical conduct and statement of commitment specific to professions working with early childhood students (2005). The AAE expanded upon areas already covered in greater detail in the original NEA code of ethics and provided additional guidance to concerns about the added complexity of teaching in the digital age (e.g., how to navigate digital interaction with students, families, and colleagues on social media).

Phronetic Perspective

More recently, scholars such as Levinson and Fay (2016) have proposed a *phronetic* approach to practical ethics, an Aristotelian concept meaning "practical wisdom," that rejects universal principles and "requires a marriage of theory and practice" (Levinson and Fay, 2016, p. 4). They posited that "Teachers have an almost infinite number of possibilities to select from at a given moment, and that is what makes teaching so complicated" (Levinson & Fay, 2016; p. 55). Phronesis, the authors argue, can help provide insight into how teachers' competing intentions and conflicting pressures can factor into teachers' ethical dilemmas and their decision-making processes. Santoro (2018), who also applied this approach, focused on demoralization, a type of dilemma in which teachers ultimately leave the profession as almost "conscientious objectors" because "they have ethical concerns about the work they are doing" (p. xi). Santoro is resolute in her assertion that teachers are living in difficult times. She made the case that value conflicts often arise for teachers surrounding issues of policies, mandates and school practices that undermine the wellbeing of students.

Methods

Participants

The sample for this qualitative study was comprised of twelve public school teachers, who varied in terms of demographic backgrounds, range in years of experience, content areas taught, K-12 grade level experience, and ethnic and linguistic backgrounds. Six of the participants were beginning teachers with 2–3 years of experience; three were mid-career teachers with 4–6 years of experience; and three were experienced teachers with between 12–30 years of experience. Seven participants taught in urban school settings, while five teachers worked in suburban school settings. The 12 teacher participants teach in a mix of grade levels: seven taught in elementary schools (K–3), four of whom were special education teachers with Teacher of Student with Disabilities (TSD) certification. Four taught high school science and one taught middle school math. Ten were female and two were male. All 12 participating teachers are from a variety of racial, ethnic, and linguistic backgrounds.

Data Collection and Analysis

Data sources included two semi-structured 60–90-minute interviews with participating teachers' reflections on critical incidents from their practice. The first semi-structured, audio-recorded interviews were conducted with the 12 participants between September and November. The first interview focused on what methodologists like Patton (2002) describe as "experience questions" to provide space for participants to expand upon the context, their thinking about events and interactions in rich detail (see appendix for interview questions).The goal of the critical incidents (Tripp, 2012) was to provide further information supplied directly from events that occurred in the participating teachers' practice during the day about how they made meaning of their daily decisions and the ethical implications that participants may have identified, noticed, and reflected upon. Recording what they perceived to be critical incidents provided the chance for participants to reflect upon very mundane daily events that occur routinely, prompting essential understandings about the meaning of what is likely happening below the surface of events themselves. The teachers recorded these daily moments that lingered in their minds beginning in October and continued throughout the spring using notes, journal reflections, text messages, voice recordings and email messages, all of which were coded in NVIVO using open coding.

Gilligan's (1982) Listening Guide method was utilized given it was designed to attend to voice, in this case the voice of teachers. Gilligan, Spencer, Weinberg, and Bertsch (2003) presented

this method of analysis that focuses on voice and relationship through multiple listenings to the information presented by participants. The Listening Guide method requires listening for three distinct types of information. First, the researcher listens for plot, referring to participants' stories and events as they describe them taking place in vivid detail. Second, first-person voice refers to how participants speak about themselves. The second listening is referred to as the Listening for "I" and first-person voice, and at this stage, an I poem is created by separating out each I phrase in order of appearance. Third, contrapuntal voice is a musical term, and attends to the gaps or missing information, conflicting understandings, or responses. Between January and March, participants were provided with their I poems and a second round of interviews took place. The third listening is known as the Listening for contrapuntal voices, which "attends to the participants voice not for its content or themes but for its quality or musicality. This means listening for different voices and their interplay, or harmonies or dissonances within the psyche, tensions with parts of itself" (Gilligan & Eddy, 2017, p. 79). This final stage attends to gaps or missing information and any conflicting understandings or responses.

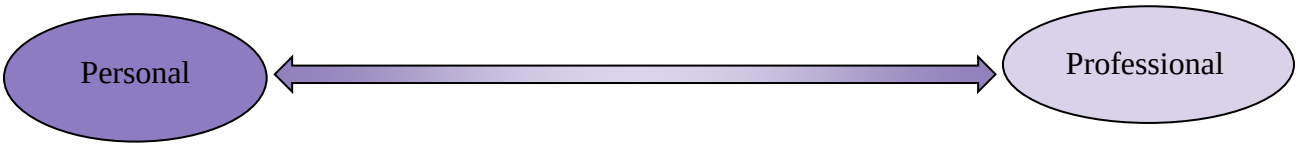
Findings

Qualitative analysis revealed that teacher participants made ethical meaning depending on scenarios and the complicated contexts in which they were situated. The participating teachers in this study overall employed a balanced approach to mediating the tensions they encountered in their educational practice. These participating teachers tried to make decisions that prioritized what is best for students, despite multiple tensions to prioritize other pressures. Each of the twelve teachers articulated their commitment to enact decisions that honor what is best for the student and directly referenced a central grounding in their professional desire and motivation to help students. These participants articulated this as their fundamental responsibility of teaching, and yet they most often felt pressures to confirm to other demands stemming from parents and administrators. There were times in which the moral, ethical, or professional responsibilities that teachers described collided, and there were major points of entanglement between participants' conceptions of these and which should prevail in specific scenarios. I argue that these entanglements can be conceptualized as four intersecting continua that help represent the ways participating teachers made meaning of ethical practice (see Figure 1). The first continuum that represents at one end, professional identity goals, and at the other end, personal identity, and concerns. Second, there is also a continuum that signifies how teachers can feel conflicted between short-term outcomes on one end regarding students' academic learning, emotional, interpersonal, and developmental needs versus students' longer-term development and growth in these same domains. Third, there is a range across a continuum that spans a concern for communal versus the individual needs regarding how they made meaning of ethical practice. Each of these three continua reflect the complexity and the multifaceted nature of the teachers' sense of self.

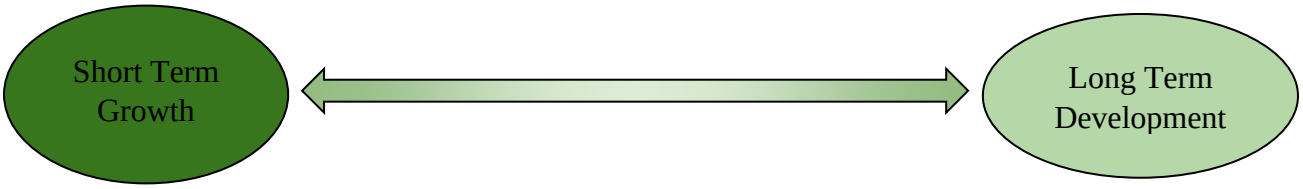
Charting these teacher participants' considerations along the continua (see Figure 1) illustrated how these tensions come together in certain contexts and intersected with one another.

Continua

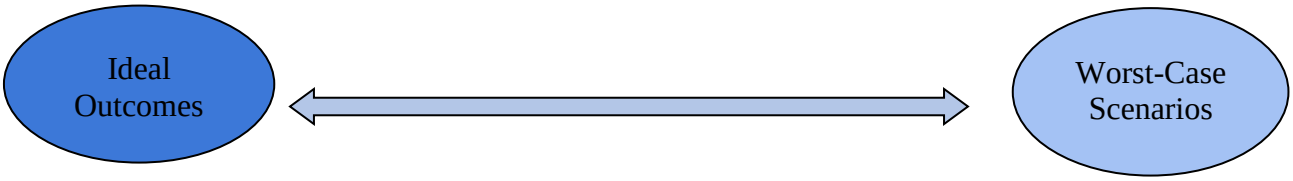
Personal versus Professional Responsibility



Short Term Growth to Long Term Development



Individual versus Communal Needs



Ideal Outcomes and Worst-Case Scenarios

Figure 1: Four Continua of competing tensions

Continuum 1: Personal as Opposed to Professional Responsibility

The first continuum represents the tensions and the negotiations between the professional and, at the other end, a more personal moral orientations that both inform ethical practice.

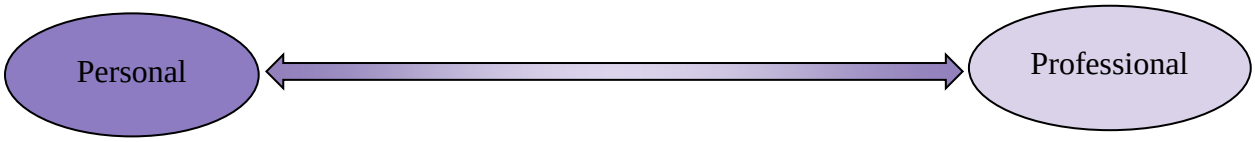


Figure 2: Continuum of Personal versus Professional Responsibility

To demonstrate the study findings, an example for each continuum generated in this study is presented below. The first was illustrated by the case of Charlotte, who repeatedly described tensions between the personal and professional lines that must be drawn in terms of adhering to relational boundaries. As a second-grade inclusion teacher, Charlotte had been teaching for 12 years, many of which were in a co-teaching setting. Her initial desire was to be a school psychologist, but when Charlotte decided to become a classroom teacher, she enrolled and completed a traditional teacher preparation program. She spent her career in the same district but moved between two urban schools in which most of the students were Hispanic and English Language Learners (ELLs).

> *Professional ethics are about doing the right things the right way, not just when somebody is looking, not just because you are getting paid, but about doing what's right, doing what's expected, and superseding those expectations. For teaching this is first and foremost making sure students are happy, healthy, and learning. This includes reflecting on practice and being honest with oneself and doing what is best for all the people involved, including family, friends, and/or the classroom of students, something that can be simple and complicated at the same time. There is also an aspect of staying centered, cutting out the noise and the negativity and staying positive, just doing one's job and just being a good person when no one is looking.* (Charlotte, Interview 1, 9-16-17)

Charlotte expressed how she cares about her students, but she also recognizes that this creates tension when she is also the disciplinarian and instructional leader. In second grade, "they are so little, and I am not, I guess, I'm not trying to be their friend. I'm trying to be a teacher figure, you know, I'm trying to just be the adult in the room … my job is to keep [them] safe at all times" (Charlotte, Interview 2, 1-18-18).

Charlotte explained that while she does not have children of her own, her students often referred to her as "mom" accidentally when they raised their hand to ask for guidance. She takes this as a positive mistake that tends to happen with students so young when they feel safe and comfortable in the classroom learning environment. Yet, Charlotte also tries to distance herself and have students show respect for the professional role of teaching. Her situation exemplifies the shared tensions experienced by many of the participating teachers as incidents from their practice prompted reflection about ethical concerns, in particular grey areas that emerged with respect to professional boundaries and the building of positive support relationships with students.

In two of her critical incident descriptions, Charlotte addressed these challenges in greater depth, revealing her emotional involvement and investment in student relationships and the tensions these create with adhering to policies. In the first incident, Charlotte described a particular student relationship: The student was really struggling in class and seemed to be neglected at home. Charlotte's desire to care for the student was evident. Charlotte and her colleague helped this student in ways that exceeded her regular teaching responsibilities on a regular basis, for example, taking the student to get his hair cut right across the street from the school. In the following excerpt, she shared:

> *I mean the boundaries were super blurred there. I was nervous about blurring the boundaries because I could get in trouble like, you know, I, this is crossing the line even though we had [his mom's] permission, he was still a student. If I walked him to the barbershop a block away, I was responsible for him. And I am putting myself in a position that if something were to happen to him, you know, the mom could always renege and say no, she had no permission. You know, she could have always claimed that I did something, or my aide did something that we did not do, or we did not say. There is a policy that says unless you have this form of documentation, you are not supposed to have this kind of contact. There is a handbook that is, you know, so vague and at some point, you just do not read it although you should, especially in situations like this, you want to see or like what we are doing. In what I told my aide at the time I was like look; I cannot take him to the barbershop.* (Charlotte, Interview 2, 1-18-18*)*

This tension can be identified by examining the I poem representing Charlotte's reflection about her choice whether to take him:

I mean
I was nervous
I could get in trouble
I am crossing the line
I walked him
I was responsible
I am putting myself in a position
I do not want this

Charlotte's care for her students also creates tensions at home and in her personal identity. Caring is a state of being that she cannot just turn off at the end of the day. However, over her 12 years teaching Charlotte recognized that she has found more balance, and she has established boundaries for the sake of her own happiness. In this regard she shares:

> *Emotionally, I think that I have learned that at the end of the day, they are not mine, I did not give birth to them. They are not my children that I take home. So, I think, although it is difficult, the weight of the emotion is difficult not to turn off when I get home. But I do, in my mind, I say okay, I am not her mom, I am not his mom, I do what I can at school, and I hope for the best when he goes home.* (Charlotte, Interview 2, 1-18-18)

Charlotte's account of meaning making of her ethical practice appears to involve a recognition that she has evolved from a very personal sense of caring and responsibility to a more professional understanding of her role as a caregiver, one that includes more clearly drawn boundaries that were hard won based on experiences with her students.

Proof of understanding of the recognizable limits to Charlotte's professional role is evidenced in her statement: "*I am not his mom*." Earlier in her career, this was not as distinct for Charlotte. She desired to impact her students' experiences outside of school, at home, and positively influence their long-term growth directly and immediately. One of Charlotte's ethical grey areas that she learned to navigate includes how she learned to draw the line between teaching responsibilities and not taking emotional baggage home with her.

Continuum 2: Short-term Growth Versus Long-term Development

The second continuum signifies how teachers can focus on short-term results on one end about students' academic learning, emotional, interpersonal, and developmental needs versus students' long-term development and growth in these same domains.

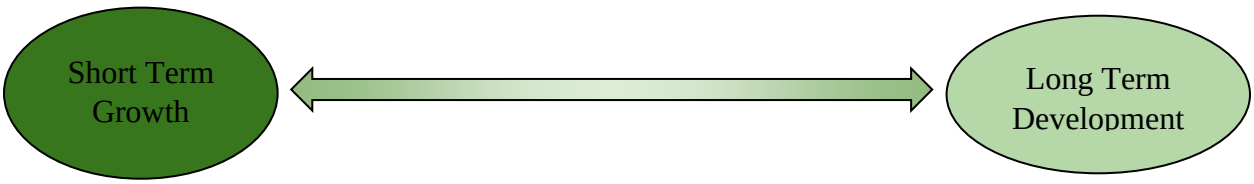


Figure 3: Short-term versus Long-term Development

Many of the participants described stressful experiences with parent-driven student grade disputes, pressures to provide make-up work after deadlines had passed, and a great deal of time spent trying to decipher policies and the best ways of managing these situations from a variety of perspectives (i.e., administrators, families, and students). These teachers articulated feeling conflicted about how to best grade student work equitably, and about providing students with fair and varied assessment of their learning. Underlying these assessment and grading issues was an ethical concern about the importance of the message about whether, in what ways, and to what extent to hold students accountable for their educational performance.

In these instances, most participating teachers articulated a belief that holding students accountable was important to the students' long-term growth, despite the selfish temptation to avoid short-term stresses and headaches with students, families, and administrators. Five of the teachers articulated a sense of understanding that what might not feel good for students in the moment (e.g., having to repeat or rework assignments, or repeat a course due to insufficient work or a failing grade) is beneficial for students' long-term learning and development. Laura explained in her first interview her ethical dilemma around the difference between her own approach to assessment practices and the approach of her colleagues:

> *You have a schedule, and you must follow that schedule since now they are sophomores, juniors, and seniors in high school. And now we say, "well they're old enough now and they should be able to do it on their own." But no one ever taught them and so how can we just say they should know how to do it? And so, I think a lot of the decisions that I make are based on a thoughtful analysis of the things that have gone on in these kids' lives up into this point. And I said at the beginning, one of the things I want to do is hold them to their accountability. But I think accountability means a lot of different things to a lot of different people. And for me, it means that yeah, maybe the work is not going to be done on time. But it is going to be done, and it is going to be done to their ability. I think my professional ethics are based on that.* (Laura, Interview 1, 10-28-17)

These examples regarding assessment practices revealed participating teachers' prioritization of students' long-term development over short-term growth, one of their most challenging endeavors. In terms of a rationale for her stance on this issue, Laura explained to her students that, "in life, they are going to have deadlines, and if they do not reach those deadlines, they are going to lose their job. And in college, their professors are going to tell them, "*Too bad*." So, they need to be responsible for their grades. (Laura, Interview 2, 1-27-18) Laura described an uphill battle trying to get students to understand the connection to life outside the system of their high school. "*The kids do not believe us when we tell them, 'When you go to college, it is not going to be like this,' and they act like we don't know what we're talking about*." When Laura reviewed her I poem on the subject after her first interview, she stated that it really revealed aspects of her practice about which she been thinking in depth.

I teach
I am with them.
I have built really strong bonds.
I always hold all my students accountable
I am quite flexible.
I will decide.
I will take their work.

I think but I always hold them accountable.
I will always stand with them.
I am not well-liked.
It kind of goes against the procedures,
But I do it.
I spend hours every single day
I give up my prep.
I just do not know
I could tell them, 'No'
I am really good at math.
I think they enjoy that
I often need to use the textbook.
I have not done this math since high school.
There is not really any decision to make.
If you ask me, I will stay.

In this exploration of her assessment and grading practices, Laura can get to the heart of some of the conflicting tensions inherent in this complicated set of factors influencing her decisions, as well as the students' decisions. Laura recognizes and calls out the district and its policies, which play a role as well. As described above, aspects of Laura's practice such as respecting, valuing, and embracing culture from a value- and strengths-based perspective reveal her relation to the Allen and FitzGerald (2017) cultural care model.

Continuum 3: Honoring Individual Needs and the Greater Community

A major element in the entangled ethical understandings of practice that were articulated in this study stemmed from the relational aspects of teaching. In this study, the one constant was that teachers tended to honor their relationships. First, they felt most compelled to honor those relationships with their students. Challenges often emerged when this desire to honor their relationships with students was at odds with the relationships or the perspectives of other adults within a school, within the educational community, and within the larger district. This translated into these teachers portraying a sense of being pulled in two different directions. Rebecca in her third year of teaching science in an urban high school, where she is one of three White teachers in the school. Rebecca's students are predominantly from under-represented groups, and she teaches a high percentage of English language learners (ELLs). Rebecca shared that her son and daughter attend private Catholic schools, which often proves to be a challenge with differing holiday schedules than the public school in which she works In Rebecca's view, one must figure out the culture of the school and how people are interpreting it and then find out the interpretation one can live with. In her case, Rebecca thought that she had improved over the past few years figuring out what administration wants, being at a level she is comfortable with and at a level that students respect as well (i.e., students know what they can and cannot get away with and they are aware of which teachers going to give them hundreds no matter what their effort is) (Rebecca, Interview 1, 10-28-17). Herein exists another continuum, along which participating teachers described attempting to strike a balance between the needs of their students on one end and the obligations engendered by being a member of a greater educational community on the other, as represented in Figure 4.

Figure 4: Individual Needs versus the Greater Community

Rebecca described an awareness that she had improved over the past few years with "*figuring out what administration wants, being at a level that I am comfortable with, and at a level that students respect as well*" (Rebecca, Interview 1, 10-28-17).

There were many incidents in which participating teachers revealed that they find themselves conflicted: precariously perched between their desire to meet the needs of a particular student for whom they are an advocate, and pressures to comply with the directions, advice, or opinions of other members of the professional educational community. These participating teachers reiterated many times that maintaining established relationships with their students is their first priority. At times, teachers experienced moments in which they were pulled between students' needs and the need to honor the views of other adults in the greater educational community. This was manifested as the views of the administration at a particular school, parents' views, a school policy, colleagues, or other support professionals. Teachers expressed the difficulties in striking a balance between these sometimes-opposing ends of this continuum, represented by an individual student's needs on one end and the voices from the educational community at large on the opposing end of this spectrum. Participating teachers in this study fell at different points along the continuum, with the majority leaning toward ensuring they meet the individual needs of their students over honoring the various needs or viewpoints of others from the greater educational community. Finding this balance between this tension was one of the ways in which these teachers made sense of their ethical practice.

Prior to becoming a teacher, Olive was an assistant teacher for many years in a preschool program. She has taught kindergarten for four years in a suburban very progressive school. Olive also teaches a night class at the local community college to second language learners. She thinks a great deal about her college students and often imagines what her kindergarteners might need when they become college students. In her view, ethical decisions play out in her classroom when she must choose what is best for her students. For Olive, these external demands come in the form of the curriculum, parental expectations, or needs of the others involved:

> *That's my job beyond my job, that's my true higher calling—if I want to be effective with this child, I have to forget about these things and I have to really focus in on what I think, what I feel, what I see, what I observe, what they've shown me that they need it...we all know we can talk about multiple intelligences all day along and different learning approaches and that's true, but yet we've got one curriculum, right. And so sometimes that is difficult for me, but morally I believe that my job is to reach the child and boost the child as much as possible. That's—the professional ethic that I am behind 100%. Whatever it takes, but sometimes that can be tricky. It could be really tricky* (Olive, Interview 1, 9-28-17).

For Olive, there is a "job beyond her job." She, like other participating teachers, was adamant that most situations in which she tried to advocate for a particular student became complicated quickly and were never as straightforward as she initially anticipated at the outset. In her statement, Olive references the personal and professional continuum: She referenced the reality that it is "difficult for me, but morally I believe that my job is to reach the child."

Olive's descriptions of these competing tensions paint a picture of an educator seeking to embody the aspects of what Purkey and Novak (2016) and Anderson (2019) refer to as intentional care, optimism, respect, and trust (ICORT), which are assumptions of Invitational Education theory and practice. Olive described how she often tried to balance the influences in which she felt compelled to choose between what is best for her students and "what the parents want or what the curriculum says." Olive emphasized that this balancing act "is a little risky" but described this as a process that first starts with her own internal sense making. She described always beginning with an examination of her own feelings, thoughts, and observations and what is best for her student and what she could be proud of in any given situation. Once she is clear on her position, Olive described incorporating other's feelings and thoughts and her attempt is always to negotiate the external demands into her approach, even if it is sometimes just to acknowledge them.

Continuum 4: Ideal Outcomes as Opposed to Worst Case Scenarios

Teachers in this study tried to achieve the most suitable outcomes for students' wellbeing, and only once it became clear these ideal results were not feasible in any given situation, they would compromise when circumstances required it. Participating teachers always described the lengths they would go to in avoiding the worst-case scenarios in each context which entailed placing the needs of adults above those of students' needs.

Participating teachers in this study often revealed conflicts around protecting students' rights, working towards social justice, and promoting not just tolerance but appreciation of racial, ethic, gender, sexual orientation, religious, and ability differences amongst students. They often described situations surrounding these issues as those which presented ethical implications. It was while describing such situations that participants engaged in a comparison between what ideally could transpire versus a worst-case scenario in any given situation. Figure 5 illustrates the two ends of the spectrum that participating teachers considered when feeling torn between what they hoped would occur versus what they feared might transpire in the given situations they described.

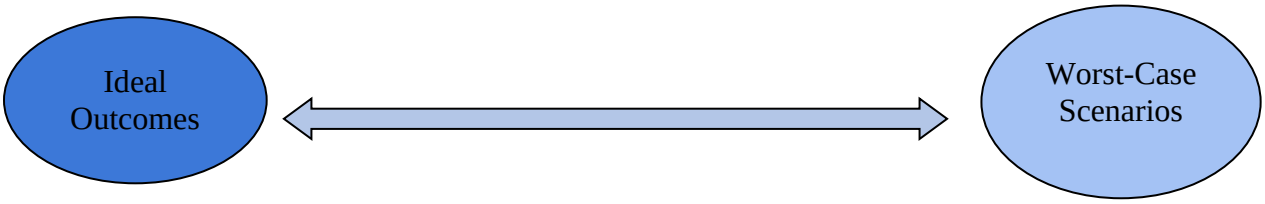


Figure 5: Ideal Outcomes versus Worst Case Scenarios

Originally from Tanzania, Alex speaks both English and Swahili. She had taught for 30 years all within the United States, both at the high school level in chemistry as well as at the elementary level in second grade. Alex very easily conjured many situations that she felt revealed her perspective on ethics.

> *Well, there were things that I have done which were unethical, but I would do them again. Things like taking food to the kids' houses for example, the teenager's house whose mother had just died, and they have no food. And how it*

*would look for a teacher—a female teacher to go to a boy—two boys living on their own, teenagers …unethical professionally, but they had no food. I would go to jail for that. You know what I mean. (*Alex, Interview 1, 9-29-17)

Alex shared that she has done this repeatedly in different contexts. One of her students had to forfeit a trip to go to Six Flags, and because the entire grade went, Alex had to stay behind with him. So, at lunch, she took him in her car (as nearly all the students normally did) for lunch off the school' grounds. As Alex described:

I did not really think about it at that moment, we just went, got lunch, came back and distributed some of the lunches, and that day—there was a sub-principal, the principal was out, so there was a sub from the main school. And I found out that he went and told the main boss that I have taken a student in my car to get lunch. So, I got called in and I said yes, I did that, and he asked, "did you know that it's against policy?" and I said yes, I knew that. I mean I did, but I did not think about it when I—so I said yeah, I knew, but this is—can I explain the situation? And he said, I am sorry, but it is not acceptable, you cannot do that. It is a liability issue, and you just can't do it. (Alex, Interview 1, 9-29-17)

However, what Alex did not realize until a few weeks later was that one of her female co-workers were having sexual relationships with students in the school, a news story that she then realized the principal knew at the time. This left a major impression on Alex:

It was a shock. I never ever imagined a teacher doing something like that. But again, it happens, there are sexual predators, but to me it was just so shocking. But then I thought about what I was doing, and I thought, oh my goodness, somebody could have accused me off the same things and what will be my defense, how could I prove anything otherwise? So that is scary, that is a scary thought. (Alex, Interview 1, 9-29-17)

As part of this meaning-making endeavor, public perception emerged as one of the concepts that weighed heavily on participants as they described contemplating possible worst-case scenarios. This took the form of both actual situations they experienced or witnessed firsthand, through witnessing or hearing accounts of what their colleagues experienced, and through imagined situations that they conjured up themselves.

From a large family of teachers, Edward at first avoided teaching but ultimately succumbed to joining the profession. Edward was in his third-year teaching biology in an urban high school. Edward saw the professional ethics of teaching about "*doing what you are supposed to do when you are supposed to do it, and it's about how you carry yourself, how you associate with your students, how you associate with other teachers, how you handle conflicts that arise*" (Edward, Interview 1, 10-2-17).

Edward described how he struggled with how to best navigate what he characterized as competing expectations. Edward revealed that he is clearly able to see these issues from multiple perspectives. These perspectives include (a) his students' perspectives, (b) his own perspective as the teacher, (c) the professional expectation to establish positive teacher and student relationships, and (d) the outsiders' perspective, who might judge from afar as "the public." Edward explained his thought processes, which were further illuminated by the contrapuntal tensions of the shift in voice from "I" to "you" to "they."

Contrapuntal analysis further revealed the tensions apparent in Edward's explanation of the complexity of the situations that involve interaction with students. He portrayed many of his students as in need of a father figure and that they often seek attention from him as a male teacher. Edward's perception of a judging public is real in his mind and represents the cases he himself has either witnessed or those which he has heard about firsthand.

Edward provided an account of a student club for which he is the advisor winning a trip to a minor league baseball game. He chose to forgo the trip with students and stated his rationale for this is that he must "*protect his license*" above all else, for his family's sake, For Edward, fear of the worst-case scenario wins over his hopes for the ideal outcome.

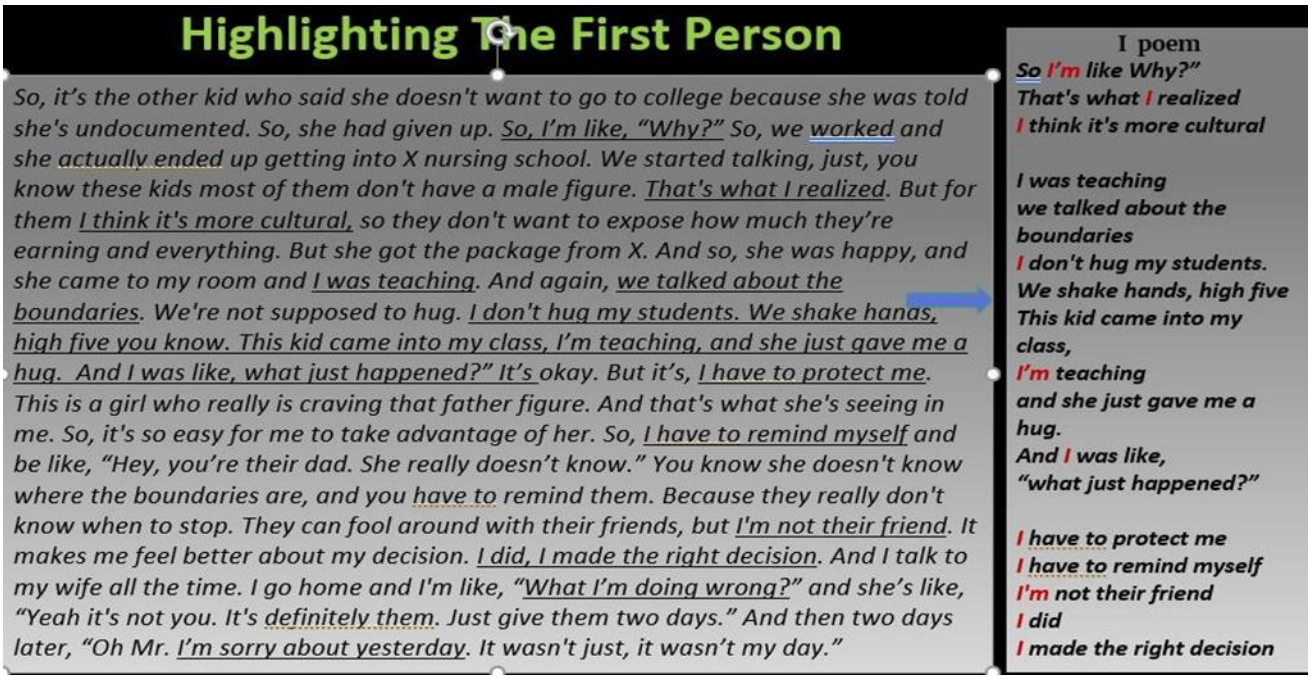


Figure 6: First Person Voice and the I Poem

Edward provided an example in which he revealed the tensions inherent in being a male teacher, trying to build rapport with students and keep them at a distance. His mentor helped him more effectively prevent such situations by setting up some strategically delivered warnings such as:

> *Just remind them. Remind them that you married, remind that you have kids, and they do that all the time. So, I joke with them "You're going to get me fired" and "I don't want to get fired. Do not walk in here coming and hugging me. People are going to start asking questions." You know when you joke about that more and more, it kind of sticks to them like yeah, "he doesn't like to be hugged."*
> (Edward, Interview 1, 10-2-17)

Edward's process reveals the tensions he experienced building and maintaining positive student relationships, his largest area of ethical conflict in his daily practice.

Discussion

Ethics in any profession are about communally agreed-upon principles of engagement, codes of involvement that guide actions, and set rules of participation that ensure safety and well-being, productivity, positive learning, and development. Lowenstein's (2008) conceptualization of ethics emphasized maximizing good and minimizing harm. She suggested that ethics are an attempt to think critically about human conduct and determining what is right and wrong. Teaching is often characterized as a humanistic profession that requires kindness, care, compassion, empathy, an understanding of others, and an ability to build connections with a variety of people. Teachers in this study reported that their primary responsibilities are grounded in promoting the well-being and learning of their students, thereby embodying the characteristics of virtuous, ICORT-driven educators. Tensions emerged however when these teachers reported trying to simultaneously advocate for their students' wellbeing while also supporting and enacting the mission of their schools, and/or trying to uphold their own sense of professional standards of excellence.

Throughout this study, participating teachers shared perspectives about the challenges they encountered daily when juggling the curricular and academic tasks of teaching with the relational needs of students with whom they forged relationships, as well as the expectations of other adults. These teachers articulated a central focus on building and maintaining caring relationships with students. However, this included substantive ethical conflicts. Care practices went in many directions, emanating from teachers (i.e., sources of care) to students, from teachers to colleagues (i.e., collective care in a school community), from teachers to families, and even as teachers directed care inward to sustain themselves (i.e., self-care). Often these care practices could compete and conflict with one another.

All 12 of the study's participants mentioned a central grounding in their professional desire and motivation to care for and help students, which was not always simple to enact. While care is situated at the center of teachers' professional responsibilities, these teachers described situations that were far from clear cut. Ethicists including Erikson (1963), Kohlberg (1981), and Piaget (1965) published straightforward rules of engagement. By contrast, Gilligan (1982) and Noddings (1984) established care ethics as an approach that challenged what they perceived as the incompleteness of previous theorists. Rather than emphasizing universal truths such as justice, Gilligan (1982) and Nodding (1984) not only recognized the primacy of caring, but also the varying degrees of interdependence between individuals in any situation. They advocated for the ethics of care as a promising alternative to the more traditional justice-based approaches.

> In an encounter or sequence of encounters that can be appropriately called *caring*, one-party acts as carer and the other as cared-for. Over time in equal relations, the parties regularly exchange positions. Adult caring relations exhibit this mutuality. However, many important relations are, by their nature, not equal relations, and mutuality cannot be expected. For example, the parent-infant relation is not one of equality. The parent can, *must*, do things for the infant that the infant cannot possibly do for the parent. (Noddings, 2012, pp. 771–772)

Noddings advocated for an ethic of care as the foundational concept in relational ethics. Like the plethora of feminists weighing in on this area of thinking, Tronto (2005) added to the literature here regarding how an ethic of care is enacted in practice specifically by identifying four specific elements of care, including attentiveness, responsibility, competence, and responsiveness.

It goes without mention that there are specific aspects of this line of thinking that have gender implications. First, Tong and Williams (2009) pointed out that care ethicists have more recently tried to separate gender from virtues and values, rather than assigning masculine and feminine perspectives on such topics as morality and moral development. Second, feminists such as Tronto (2012) have argued that gender roles are social and culturally constructed. Since care-based professions are traditionally comprised of women, care can sometimes be assumed to be a feminine characteristic or role.

Aspects of care, or care-based ethics, emerged as a salient focus for this study. Many participants expressed the importance of upholding a positive influence on students and creating and sustaining a responsive connection with other educators and support professionals in the school community as well. Inherent in the descriptions of care practices presented later, there was a distinct importance placed on the context of the situations in which participating teachers' dilemmas emerged. Interdependence between teachers and students within the classroom context was always emphasized, and this extended to other teachers, administrators, and support professionals within the great school and larger district communities; essentially relationships provided both the background, as well as the foreground, to teachers' considerations of ethical practice.

Participants' expressions of care in this study exhibited multiple dimensions, acting as both an undergirding principle and an overarching umbrella of ethical practice. Care practices also unfolded communally. Teachers often described the importance of individual students being a part of the larger inclusive community in which all students' needs are respected and each member of the community must show and be shown empathy and compassion. This was conveyed as a classroom priority in that each teacher seemed to feel beholden—as the articulated in their interviews—to build, maintain, and model effective relationship-building skills with all students and serve as a moral role model for students. Care based ethics were described as the venue whereby teachers could make a positive difference for students, through daily practice. As professionals in a human-focused caring profession, the study's participants reported ways in which showing care for students helped so many aspects of their practice. This ranged increasing students' motivation and commitment, improving students' sense of confidence for a subject, being more willing to try new tasks, and engaging in less appealing aspects of learning. Care was the vehicle for relationship development and formed a context for learning in the classroom community.

Seven participants' statements right at the beginning of their first interviews directly reference the centrality of care in the daily work of teaching, the need to show empathy and compassion to students. By way of illustration, Alana spoke about "how much I care about my students" and how "I try to be someone that cares about them" since "as teachers we are entrusted with their care, and their education" (Interview 1, 9-25-17). Another example of the role that care plays can be seen in Brady's statements that "I am very caring about people" something he communicated included pitfalls because "I care so much, sometimes I think I care about them more than they care about themselves" (Interview 1, 11-4-17).

Professionals undoubtedly have a responsibility to make decisions and enact principles that extend past their personal subjections, yet teachers in this study felt conflicted about doing so for several reasons explained herein. As Gilligan and Attanucci (1988) first posited, the justice stance is often pitted against the care approach. In actuality, the findings of this study show that most teachers are making decisions that employ a more integrated approach that incorporates aspects of both care and justice within the various I-position within their minds. These findings support the

assertion that these teachers are virtuous, ICORT-driven educators that often struggled with both internal ethical dilemmas and competing beliefs about what it means to make positive societal contributions as an educator. Perhaps this explanation helps to unpack why Kohlberg's (1981) six stages, while foundational in the field, are insufficient to explain how teachers navigate ethically charged situations of practice. Similarly, it may be unsatisfactory to use a theory of moral development to account for teachers' ethical meaning-making process. After all, as Barrett and colleagues (2012) posited, professional ethics serve multiple purposes: to ensure high professional standards, to protect students, and to guide teachers in their decision-making. While there are differing theories on how to best unpack ethically complex situations, as Aristotle argues in his moral philosophy, "the good and the just are not found solely in abstract principles or rules, but rather are lived and made in the messiness of everyday life" (Levinson and Fay, 2016, p. 48).

Conclusions and Implications

The results of this study suggest that how teachers make meaning of and enact ethical practice depends on how they perceive and respond to multiple sets of competing tensions. These tensions can emerge at various times, and in different ways, depending on the context in which they work. Most recently this became especially clear during the COVID-19 pandemic, when schools and instruction were required to move online. As a result, ethical issues for teachers increased. The four continua developed out of the data collected and analyzed using Gilligan's Listening Guide clearly surfaced as the education community was forced into an unplanned online learning experiment. Thereafter, teachers described their struggles to build and maintain student relationships in virtual and online learning environments. Many teachers articulated the ethical challenges they faced as lines between home and work blurred. A representation of the tensions found on the first continuum: A professional orientation of ethics compared to a more personal moral orientation of ethical practice collided. At first many teachers during COVID-19 planned for a short-term disruption. As online schooling extended, many teachers began to question the ways in which students' *long-term* goals, including emotional, interpersonal, and developmental needs, would be negatively impacted. Similarly, the fourth continuum, which represents how teachers navigated the desire to contribute toward *ideal* outcomes in any given situation versus avoiding the *worst-case* scenarios become evident through teachers' experiences during COVID-19. As school closures increased, concerns of the spread of the pandemic increased the focus upon equity as a marginalizing factor that contributed to educational disadvantages and students' disfranchisement (Sequeira & Dacey, 2020).

To assist prospective teachers in the process of navigating ethical practice, unpacking these continua of tensions would be useful to formally address with pre-service teachers during their teacher preparation programs. Overall, this study contributes to the ongoing base of knowledge regarding how teachers navigate rule-based compared to care-based orientations to address ethical dilemmas and how they can enact ethical practice through an integrated hybrid approach.

This study suggests potential implications and recommendations for pre-service teacher education programs. None of the participating teachers in this study cited memories of addressing ethics in a stand-alone course during their preparation programs. One recommendation is to offer more professional development opportunities that purposefully explore reflective practice while contextualizing and integrating the blend of both personal moral beliefs and professional ethics as they evolve and emerge in daily practice.

Additionally, principal/supervision and leadership programs must dedicate more time to raising awareness, actively modeling, and cultivating intentionally inviting, ethical school cultures that support teachers' ethical reflection. Since the start of the COVID pandemic, teachers' stress levels and rates of burnout have reached all-time highs, resulting in many seriously considering leaving the profession (Zamarro et al, 2021).

There is no clear end to the steep increases in teacher turnover. Teacher shortages are becoming increasingly problematic nationwide. Amidst these challenges, it is imperative that educational stakeholders consider professional development opportunities that can assist teachers to navigate the ethical dilemmas they face daily in the classroom (Sequeira & Dacey, 2020).

There is a gap in the existing teacher education literature related to pre-service and practicing teachers' ethical preparation and the possible impact upon reducing negative incidents of lying, cheating, or abuse in the classroom, the school, and the field of education. Research in this area is clearly necessary. Relatedly, there is an absence of research comparing the effects upon teachers who have had an explicit course in ethics, those who went through teacher preparation programs experiencing an integrated approach to ethical preparation, or those teachers whose program lacked any ethical preparation.

Furthermore, it is troubling that little has been explored internationally to compare ethical decision-making across interdisciplinary professional fields. Overall, this study contributes to the ongoing base of knowledge regarding how teachers make meaning of and enact ethical practice. In addition, this study's design showed that Gilligan's (1982) Listening Guide can effectively be applied to teachers in their professional practice, thereby further generalizing its utility from previous populations, including veterans, nurses, and other professions. Using Gilligan's Listening Guide (1982) during this study revealed that teachers rarely adhere to absolutes. Rather, these participating teachers exhibited that they navigate a complex array of competing and overlapping tensions each day. In real practice, they exhibited due diligence to make meaning of dilemmas and enact ethical practice while navigating an abundance of ethically grey areas.

Advocates for Invitational Education Theory and Practices will always encourage the pursuit of becoming a virtuous, ICORT-driven educator. If a goal without a plan is just a wish; then an ICORT-driven educator believes it is ethically necessary and pedagogically sound to always plan for success by consistently reflecting on one's ethical practice. Therefore, strengthen your pedagogy through the active pursuit of increased awareness, elevated knowledge, and willingness to evaluate ethical dilemmas with care.

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Using Invitational Theory and Practice as a Framework for Optimizing Marketing Education

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Introduction

The pandemic's aftermath has shifted how institutions and their stakeholders seek to function in the "new normal." Marketing students are seeking flexibility in terms of the delivery of content. Like corporate marketers, marketing departments and faculties are challenged with seeking a solution that satisfies the needs of students, accrediting bodies, and provides rigor in terms of curriculum delivery no matter what modality is utilized or the number of students in the classroom. This paper introduces an innovative approach to teaching that seeks to maximize both the student's and educator's success in and out of the traditional classroom.

Invitational Education Theory (IET) and practices (Purkey & Novak, 2016; Purkey, Novak, & Fretz, 2020) offers marketing educators an innovative approach. IET promises to improve and enrich the teaching and learning process by addressing both personal and professional practices. IET is applicable for both small and large college classrooms, and the approach does not require additional funds or training. A special value of IET is that it is inclusive by being culturally responsive. The goal of IET is to build a more positive and humane relationship between professors and students. While IET is new to marketing education, it has found success in the realm of teaching and leadership education. Invitational Education has appeared in over 223 dissertations, master's theses, and conference presentations, 214 articles, and 58 books and book chapters (Edwards, 2021). Therefore, it is an evidence-based n framework to deliver curriculum to students in various class sizes and various modalities of delivery.

Lamont and Friedman (1997) noted changing times allow educators to innovate beyond traditional practice and encourage students to gain more knowledge and skills. The authors also indicated that marketing educators must develop imaginative marketing curricula and methods of delivery to meet the needs of current marketing students.

This paper will be structured as follows. First, the conceptual framework of IET will be summarized to give the reader a more concise understanding of the theory. More specifically, it will highlight the three foundations of IET including (1) the democratic ethos, (2) self-concept theory, and (3) the perceptual tradition, and how they shape content delivery. Practical application and examples of traditional practice will be reviewed. IET also identifies how the five elements of intentionality, care, optimism, respect, and trust (i.e., I-CORT) are essential elements to establish an inclusive, relation centered, educational practice. I-CORT parallels current marketing theory of being relational (Bradley, 2008) versus transactional. Practical application of I-CORT will also be shared to benefit the reader.

The marketing students' verbatim responses as taken from the southern R1 university's end of course evaluations will also be shared as evidence to the effectiveness of utilizing IET in marketing education. In addition, IET explores how the five domains of people, places, policies,

programs, and processes (5 Ps) enhance student learning. Also, an explanation is presented on the various levels of intentionality and the interlocking dimensions that shape the marketing educator's ability to be both professionally and personally inviting with self and others. Moreover, a quantitative analysis will be conducted showing a comparison of mean scores taken from university administered student evaluations for classes ranging from 40 to 1250 and delivered both online and in-person. Grade distributions will also be offered as evidence of IET's application both online and in the classroom. The findings reveal classes taught by professors using IET had higher mean scores than those not using IET. What was encouraging with the results were class size or delivery method (i.e., in-person or remote) were not a factor, more specifically, mean scores were higher for instructors regardless of class size and the delivery method. These encouraging results show the success IET has in delivering marketing content in the classroom and online for any size class.

Conceptual Framework

Simply stated, IET can be thought of as a mindset that encourages people to realize their potential in all aspects of worthwhile human endeavor (Purkey & Novak, 2015). Specifically, IET provides a learning environment that intentionally summons people in educational settings to become part of a learning culture through intentionality. The conceptual model for IET lists the five parts that make up the framework of IET (Purkey & Novak, 2015).

Foundations

IET is anchored by three conceptual foundations. These are the democratic ethos, self-concept theory, and the perceptual tradition. Each will be discussed below.

Democratic Ethos

Democracy is a belief that all people matter, especially when decisions are being made that affect them. Those affected should have a say in the desired outcome. This increases their buy-in and is like implementing marketing strategy and seeking buy-in from employees to realize the goals the firms seek to achieve.

Self-Concept Theory

Self-concept acts as both a precursor and outcome of human activity, defining individuals as "I," "me," or "my." Self-concept is internal dialogue and is what individuals say about themselves to themselves (Purkey, 2000). Therefore, by creating a positive environment, students will be encouraged to develop positive behaviors and achieve greater success in school and beyond due to positive and realistic self-conceptualization.

The Perceptual Tradition

The perceptual tradition emphasizes that perceived events in one's life, not the event alone, is a key element in guiding the perception they have of situations (Purkey, Novak, and Fretz, 2020). IET provides a way to recognize and accept the perceptions of others and use this understanding to create shared classroom successes.

The Five Elements of I-CORT

The five interdependent elements of I-CORT are (1) intentionality, (2) care, (3) optimism, (4) respect, and (5) trust. These elements closely resemble modern marketing strategy that focuses

on relationship (Bradley, 2008) versus transactional practices to enhance the customer's experience. Each will be further reviewed below.

Intentionality. An intentional professor maintains a consistent stance that purposively offers students something beneficial for consideration. Intentionality begins with educators and cascades to students to create an environment that strives to maximize student achievement. Intentionality allows for students to see their education as a place of opportunity due to the positive intentions of their professor (Gillespie, 2005). Intentionality has also been found to create value in markets between customers and firms (Hawa, Baker, & Plewa, 2020). This same premise holds true for students, as the more intentional a professor is with his or her teaching, the greater the student success will be.

Care. Care is the most important of the five elements of I-CORT. Care reflects current marketing theory emphasizing the formation of good relations with a firm's target market (Raggio, Walz, Godbole, & Folse, 2014), encouraging positive word of mouth (Brown, Barry, Dacin, & Gunst, 2005), brand trust (Ha & Perks, 2005), and greater customer loyalty (Ahearne, Bhattacharya, & Gruen, 2005). Care was also recognized as a key characteristic possessed by marketing educators (Conant, Smart, & Kelley, 1988). In 2001, Hennig-Thurau, Langer, and Hansen. reported that marketing educators need to focus on a student-centric model for success as they are both active and collaborative partners in their student's education.

Optimism. IET stresses that human potential is boundless based on the educator's optimism for the material taught and its impact on their student's lives. Optimism brings out student capabilities by creating a welcoming climate where diversity is encouraged. A study conducted by Medlin and Faulk (2011) found that in an academic setting, there is a positive relationship between engagement and optimism, and this relationship leads to higher levels of student performance. An empirical study conducted by Hough, Sumlin, & Green, (2020) found that of three antecedents to performance (i.e., organizational trust, ethical environment, and workplace optimism), workplace optimism had the greatest impact.

Respect. IET asserts that students are capable, valuable, and responsible, and should be treated as such. By marketing educators being intentionally inviting, they create culturally responsive places, policies, programs, and processes that establish respect, thus encouraging students to excel. Work by Lincoln (2008) found that respect leads to higher levels of rapport between educators and students from all cultures. Additional research conducted by Hair (1990) reported that respect given at the marketing department level helps individuals meet their goals when they feel they are part of the bigger picture and can contribute. Respect helps marketing educators both at a personal and instructional level and is a key element in teaching.

Trust. The fifth I-CORT indicator of personal and professional success is trust. Trust in marketing education has shown to increase student focus, improve coordination and communication, boost collaboration, and encourages group members who are not performing to meet the expectations of the team (Huff, Cooper, & Jones, 2002). Trust helps students make more meaningful and productive decisions toward their success. Therefore, creating a trusting setting for students provides one of the keys to maximizing their performance and success. Table 1 demonstrates how I-CORT might be evidenced in relation to traditional approaches to teaching a marketing course compared to an invitational approach.

Table 1

ICORT in Relation to Traditional Approach and Invitational Approach

The Five I-CORT Elements	Traditional Approach	Invitational Approach
Intentionality	• Arrive to class not before, but at the starting time. • Instructor distributes and collects student materials without comment. • Instructor dresses in very casual clothing. • Instructor may or may not begin and end class on schedule.	• Instructor arrives to class before students and ensures the classroom is arranged in a welcoming environment. • Instructor asks students to help distribute and collect materials. • Instructor dresses that express respect to students and pride in their job. • Instructor is intentional about starting and ending class on time.
Care	• Instructor distributes class materials and explains requitements. • In large classes, the instructor fails to put any effort into learning student's names. • The instructor sticks close to the course content without personal comments. • The instructor ignores the classroom's temperature and lighting. • The instructor states the grading requirements just once in the syllabus.	• Instructor welcomes students and collects a brief data sheet on each student, asking for contact information and any special needs. • In large classes, the instructor works hard to learn names or uses name tents they distribute day one. • The instructor shares personal experiences to make the learning more relatable. • The instructor carefully attends to making the classroom comfortable for students. • The instructor reviews the syllabus grading requirements to ensure they are up to date.
Optimism	• Instructors use the same lecture notes with no updates or changes. • Instructor does not review the last lecture and starts with only new material. • Instructor attention is focused on just presenting the course content without asking questions of the class to gauge	• The instructor uses updated lecture material to improve the lecture. • Instructor reviews the previous material from class and then begins with new material. • Instructor asks questions while lecturing to see if students are comprehending the material.

	if they are comprehending the material. • Instructor speaks to students as they feel with no regard for the negative impact words may bring.	• Professor uses words that have a positive influence and avoid using those with a negative connotation.
Respect	• When using multi-media, the instructor faces the screen and not the class. • Instructor never compliments students for their hard work. • Instructor rushes through the lecture material to stay on track with the syllabus. • Instructor returns student assignments on their time frame. • Instructor cancels class without notice. • Instructor leaves as so as class is over without stay to address student questions.	• Instructor faces the class when using multi-media. • Instructor complements students for their abilities in every possible way. • Instructor takes their time with the lecture material as they concentrate on student comprehension. • Instructor returns student assignments promptly, so students know where they stand with their grade. • Instructor never cancels a class and will ask a colleague or PhD student to cover. • Instructor stays after class to answer questions and prepare the classroom for the next group of students.
Trust	• Instructor shares information that was told to them in private. • Instructor singles out students during class and embarrasses them to prove a point. • Instructor acts as they please with no regard for how it will affect students.	• The instructor allows students to confide in them and does not share the information. • Instructor never embarrasses a student in class by singling them out. • Instructor thinks before acting to not offend anyone.

Table 2 below demonstrates verbatim student responses taken from teaching evaluations distributed at the end of spring 2019 and spring 2021 semesters by the participating university. Classes were taught online, in-person, and varied from 30-1250. Instructors' designation for using IET was determined by a review of the philosophy of teaching statement for the department. Each element of I-CORT is used to demonstrate how effective IET is in marketing education.

Table 2

Student Verbatim Responses in Relation to I-CORT Element

Intentionality "He makes his live videos of the lectures and then posts them right after he is done in case anyone could not attend. He is very accommodating during the pandemic for people's personal lives and answers any questions openly that his students have. He puts in a lot of effort to be the best that he can, and it truly shows!" "He makes himself extremely available for students and encourages us to participate." "He is the most engaging, efficient, and easy to talk to professor! He has mastered the impossible task of teaching us valuable information, letting us look at extremely current/relevant topics, while letting us have fun and have a say in how the class goes."
Care "This was an enjoyable class, and it was clear that you really care about your students and their success." "Professor X is really good at communicating the material and keeping students engaged despite the online platform. He is very caring and makes me more confident in learning online." "He got to know every student which makes you want to participate even more."
Optimism "With everything going on with COVID-19, the Professor did a great job of making the course flow smoothly." "It helped me understand a marketer role in the business world." "Professor X is one of those professors that you want to communicate with after taking his class and show him how much the course material helped in the real world!"
Respect "Dr. Y is an amazing professor because his goal is to teach his students, while also demonstrating the highest level of respect for his students that I have ever seen." "Great communication and made the assignments interactive and engaging." "Dr. X made it a priority to learn my name which is difficult to pronounce. Most of my other professors continually mispronounce it despite me correcting them. His efforts made me feel respected as a student and person."
Trust "Thank you for being so caring and aware of the situations that have changed, and impacted student's lives due to COVID-19! Your efforts do not go unnoticed!" "Best professor! Knows his material and gives students confidence to reach their goals."

Domains: The Five Powerful Ps

The "Five Powerful Ps" (people, places, policies, programs, and processes) that create and maintain any educational culture are all instrumental in determining the success or failure of the educative process. Student success depends on each of these to realize their potential because they function simultaneously. As graphically exhibited on the cover of this journal, IET uses a starfish analogy to represent the interdependency of the 5Ps. Just as each arm of a starfish applies constant and persistent pressure upon a mussel, IET's goal is to apply a consistent and persistent level of intentionality using all the Powerful 5 Ps to achieve student success.

Levels of Functioning

One's intentionality to be inviting can be misunderstood, thinking that educators must be nice, give extra credit, pay a compliment, or make exceptions. While these are surface examples of being inviting, IET requires more. The following are four levels of functioning marketing educators demonstrate in their teaching both in and out of the classroom.

Intentionally disinviting. This the lowest and most lethal level of functioning. The educator's negativity is deliberate with the intention of demeaning, discouraging, and defeating their student's self-worth and academic development. Examples include criticizing students for asking questions or discriminating against certain individuals and groups. Inviting professors are memorable, while intentionally disinviting professors are forgettable.

Unintentionally disinviting. The second negative level of functioning results from a consistent lack of direction in teaching. Behaviors that signify this low level of functioning include a lack of care, being condescending, dictatorial, and thoughtless. Professors at this level have no idea they are exhibiting these behaviors, but the damage is already done to the students.

Unintentionally inviting. The positive third level of functioning is the marketing educator who practices many actions associated with IET but has no idea they are doing so. An analogy of an unintentionally inviting professor is an early "barn-storming" airplane pilots who flew "by the seat of their pants" when the weather was clear. When storms gathered, they had to land because they had no dependable guidance system. In marketing education, professors tend to use a particular methodology to teach because it usually works. However, when asked their philosophy of teaching, they may lack a dependable theory of practice. Unfortunately, when events disrupt how they teach, they become disoriented. Disruptions may cause them fall back to the two lower levels of functioning. This negative behavior results from a lack of a consistent stance.

Intentionally Inviting. At the highest level of functioning are exhibited by intentionally inviting educators who have a positive and consistent guidance system. If disruptions occur, their response is consistent with I-CORT. An analogy for this top level of functioning are pilots of modern jetliners. Because they have a reliable evidence system, they can navigate around threatening storms. Consistent with marketing strategy, marketing educators devise and implement a tactical and strategic plan. Their academic plan is long-term in nature and is designed to ensure student success. When they experience issues, they adjust their tactical plan, but their strategic plan does not waiver. A plan is only as good as its execution and only as successful as the instructor putting it into action.

The Four Corner Press

A significant goal of IET is to summon marketing educators to develop themselves, both personally and professionally. The Four Corner Press emphasizes being personally and professionally inviting with oneself and others. Seeking an ideal balance among the four corners is difficult at times, but the goal is to seek balance and find harmony among the four corners.

Corner one: Being personally inviting with oneself. This corner is crucial in becoming an intentionally inviting marketing educator. It is important to view oneself as able, valuable, and responsible. This requires continually reinventing oneself and striving to maintain good mental and physical health. When one is intentionally caring, optimistic, respectful, trusting (i.e., I-CORT) towards oneself, it is easier to share the same about others.

Corner two: Being personally inviting with others. This second corner considers the thoughts, feelings, and goals of others, and getting to know others as people and not as labels. Being personally inviting with others is empathy expressed by concern, and support. This helps students and colleagues understand that all are on a journey of learning and improvement. From an IET viewpoint, education should be human first, and only after that, professional. A professor's life is never so busy that there is no time for an inviting act.

Corner three: Being professionally inviting with oneself. This third corner maintains having an ethical awareness that is both positive and realistic. In practical terms it means to seek out the latest technology, attend conferences and webinars, and seek any other means to stay current and relevant in marketing education. Staying relevant in a changing world is vital just as firms seek to continuously improve to maintain a competitive advantage. Skills and information typically have a short shelf life, so staying current helps marketing professors grow professionally.

Corner four: Being professionally inviting with others. This corner is the capstone of a truly inviting professor. From an IET perspective, it is essential that marketing professors reflect often on the way they conduct their day-to-day professional activities and responsibilities. Being professionally inviting in teaching marketing can mean using simulations, discussion boards, and intentionally giving students a great deal of responsiveness in class discussions.

One's ability to balance and harmonize these four corners is not easy, but the result is to have a beneficial presence with yourself and others both professionally and personally. It will also help in one's ability to sustain desire, commitment, and enthusiasm for teaching in the new normal.

Methodology

Using Pearson Correlations testing the relationship between IET practices and student satisfaction. Amos and Purkey (1988) conducted a seminal quantitative research study. Data was collected from 1045 students of 74 dental hygiene instructors at 22 colleges in the Southeastern section of the United States using the *Invitational Teaching Survey (ITS)*. ITS identifies and measures professional and personal inviting teaching practices. In addition, the *Student Attitudinal Outcome Measure (SAOM)* was developed and validated student satisfaction with the course, subject matter, and self-as-a-learner. The results found a strong and positive relationship between inviting instructor practices (i.e., total ITS scores) and student affective outcome measures (i.e., total SAOM scores) ($R^2 = .72$). In addition, professionally inviting ($R^2 = .67$) and personally inviting ($R^2 = .69$) sub scores were also strong and positive. Moreover, when combined, professionally and personally inviting sub scores were $R^2 = .72$, thus indicating a strong and positive relationship. The authors also used ITS sub scores as predictors of SAOM sub scores and found that (1) ITS sub score of coordination was the best predictor of course and subject matter. (2) ITS sub score consideration was the best predictor of instructor outcomes. (3) ITS sub scores coordination and consideration were the best predictor of self-as-a-learner. Comparing the SAOM and ITS sub scores using forward stepwise regression found consideration and coordination accounted for 52% of the variance. The results showed that instructors that rated highest using both being professionally and personally IET maximized student satisfaction.

This present study will compare mean scores of classes taught by a variety of marketing instructors at a major R1 university in the South. Mean scores were gathered from both Spring 2019 and 2021 undergraduate teaching evaluations using a five-point Likert scale comparing the question "what is the instructor's overall performance?" The data for 2020 was not available due

to COVID and the University not issuing student evaluations. Student evaluations were analyzed comparing instructors using IET and those that did not. In 2021, class sizes ranged from 30 to 1250 students and the content was delivered in-person and remote. The larger classes (i.e., those greater than 100) were taught remote.

Table 3 below shows the quantitative findings of this present study. Specifically, it compares instructor mean scores from student evaluations for IET and non-IET instructors using remote and in-person classes, plus those mean scores comparing the marketing department and University. It also identifies the class sizes and mean scores for IET faculty and non-IET faculty to demonstrate the application it provides students in larger classes taught online. Finally, Table 3 identifies grade distribution for instructors using IET versus other teaching methods using grade distributions for marketing research sections taught by various professors; two sections were taught remotely, and three sections were taught in-person. Class sizes varied from 30 to 70 students. These sections utilized the same textbook, publisher's exams, final project criteria, and five assignments used for AACSB accreditation. Additionally, 4 of the 5 professors utilizing IET have been awarded either College of Business Teaching Awards, University Teaching Awards, or both as selected by their peers.

Table 3

Spring 2019 and 2021 IET and non-IET Teaching Methods by Teaching performance, Class Size, and Grade Distribution

Mean Scores	**IET Spring 2019**	**Non-IET Spring 2019**	**IET Spring 2021**	**Non-IET Spring 2021**
Average mean scores	4.77	4.01	4.84	4.01
Average Marketing Department Mean Scores	4.54	4.54	4.51	4.51
Average University Mean Scores	4.31	4.31	4.33	4.33
In-person delivery of content	4.77	4.19	4.87	4.09
Online delivery of content	4.71	3.72	4.74	4.04

Class Sizes	IET Spring 2019	Non-IET Spring 2019	IET Spring 2021	Non-IET Spring 2021
Class Size less than 60	4.87	4.09	4.77	4.04
Class size ranging from 450-1250	4.72	N/A	4.71	N/A

Grades	Fall 2020 Remote IET	Fall 2020 Remote Non-IET	Spring 2021 In-person IET	Spring 2021 Remote IET	Spring 2021 In-person Non-IET
A	52.2%	15.6%	44%	44%	14%
A-	26.1%	0%	44%	22%	21%
B+	4.3%	18.8%	12%	22%	21%
B	4.3%	46.9%	0%	12%	21%
B-	8.7%	0%	0%	0%	14%
C+	2.2%	12.5%	0%	0%	0%
C	2.2%	6.3%	0%	0%	9%
C-	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

Findings

The results of the quantitative analysis support the theoretical nature of IET as an approach for optimizing student potential. If employed, a MANOVA would identify the actual significance of demonstrated differences. Instructors practicing IET had higher mean scores than those who do not practice. What is most encouraging is that instructors utilizing IET had higher mean scores for their overall performance in the face-to-face classes for both periods assessed. What is very encouraging is that this performance was mirrored for their online classes. Online classes reviewed varied from 450-1250 students, indicating the IET is a method of teaching marketing that is suitable method of delivery, plus in-person. In addition, IET instructors also had higher mean scores than both the university and department averages, while non-IET instructors failed to score higher. Moreover, grade distributions were higher for students in classes taught using IET than those that did not. Based on the results, sections using IET had higher grade distributions than those not utilizing this method. While comparing grades has been met with reluctance, the results suggest the positive influence of using IET versus other teaching techniques both remotely and in-person.

Overall, the results demonstrate that intentionally inviting students to have a greater part in their marketing education exhibits encouraging results. Overall performance is ranked higher, and grades seem to be positively impacted. Based on these results, it is reasonable to suggest that IET practices demonstrate a feasible and no-cost option for yielding positive student outcomes.

Contributions and Implications

The authors believe that IET offers many opportunities for marketing education. It allows professors at the collegiate level, who have been educated more toward doing research rather than

toward teaching, a means to reconceptualize the way they teach marketing content in their classrooms or online. It also provides a roadmap, like marketing strategy, on how to deliver marketing content. IET also gives marketing educators a way to increase student engagement which enhances comprehension. An additional contribution is a framework that can be reflected upon by educators to improve their personal and professional lives. IET is especially relevant today as it seeks inclusion, encourages human relationships, and has an interdisciplinary focus.

Practical applications of IET could include redesigning class materials such as syllabi, handouts, discussion boards, case studies, and evaluation methods to make them as welcoming as possible, both in the classroom and virtually. Course materials can exhibit the five I-CORT elements. For example, a welcoming syllabus can open with a statement on the relevance of the course and how it will help student succeed. Statements on "What you can expect from your instructor" have a similar impact of developing a positive relationship between marketing professors and students. A simple implication of IET is to learn students by their preferred name. This can be a challenge in large classes, but it is an important step towards communicating a sense of care and respect for students. Moreover, making yourself available to students is critical. Schedule office hours at times when students will be able to attend. Also, when students come to see you, provide them your undivided attention, and make the student's visit to your office a pleasant experience. Offer advice, go over questions, and address concerns students may have with honest and encouraging suggestions. A warm, open, and respectful conversational style helps students ask questions without fear of reprisal.

Limitations and Future Research

To determine actual statistical significance, data analysis should employ a MANOVA to determine the significance of difference. As currently known, limitations of this study include possible perceived infringement on how marketing instructors prefer to deliver marketing content. IET is a choice, not an edict, and is based on voluntary adoption and practice. The results of this study were tested at one Research One school in the South. The results may not be generalizable to other regions of the US.

Future research could include conducting a large-scale quantitative study to measure the significance of I-CORT for each of the five elements or I-CORT. Every student is an individual, so further quantitative research may provide additional insights contributing to learning.

Conclusion

` An Invitational Theory of Practice (IET) offers marketing instructors a language of transformation to enrich their lives and those of students by creating and maintaining a teaching environment that cordially summons students to get the most out of their marketing education. IET has met significant success in education primarily at the K-12 level, however its successes have been reported in other disciplines as well (Edwards, 2021). This innovative teaching may be well received and practiced by professors at colleges and universities. The authors believe that by implementing this innovative way to deliver marketing content, marketing educators will find greater joy in their teaching, greater satisfaction in their careers, and their students will learn more about marketing.

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An Introduction to Perceptual Theory: A Theoretical Explanation of Individual Human Behavior

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Abstract

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 in on the first of these foundations, which the author intentionally describes as *perceptual theory*. Perceptual theory provides a theoretical foundation for understanding and explaining human behaviour, and could provide very important insights into the offering and receiving of invitations. 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. The author begins by providing an overview of perceptual theory, exploring some of the central tenets and implications. The author then reviews the history of the development of the theory, which the author believes has been overlooked and by-passed: not enough people know about perceptual theory. The author introduces a number of perceptual theory basics, which can be a helpful way of introducing the theory. The essay concludes with an exploration of a number of potential implications and applications for the Invitational community.

Key Words: *Invitational Theory, Invitational Education, Perceptual Theory, The Perceptual Tradition, Perceptual Psychology, Perceptual-Experiential Psychology, A Field Approach to Psychology*

Introduction

Invitational Education theory rests firmly on three interconnected but distinct theoretical foundations: *the perceptual tradition, self-concept theory,* and a *democratic ethos* (Purkey, Novak, & Fretz, 2020). Fully understanding and applying invitational theory requires an appropriate acknowledgement and consideration of each of these distinct foundations. Each theoretical approach offers something of unique and significant value to a theory that seeks to integrate them all. Our invitational practices are likely to be enriched by the process.

One of the things that has become clear to me after over 25 years working in education and educational leadership is that we can too easily overlook theory. Of course education is rooted in effective practice. Theory is NOT everything. Indeed, this gets to the heart of the invitational approach: an invitation does not happen in theory, it is experienced—a direct transition from theory to practice. An invitation only occurs when it is both enacted by the *inviter* and experienced by the *invited*! However, a good theory has value because it can help us to better understand the nature and impact of our practice. Indeed, a well-developed theoretical foundation can help us more

carefully attend to both the perceptions of our practice, as well as the way in which others perceive and experience our actions. In my experience, too often educational practices are rooted in an incomplete knowledge and awareness of the theoretical foundations that underlie them. This is unfortunate, because a rich and fully-developed understanding of a theory is likely to lead to more effective practice, and more strategic, intentional, and effective application. We see this in many areas in education today. Having students work in groups is not the same as carefully structured cooperative learning. Inquiry-based learning does not simply involve establishing a discovery-rooted context and providing hands-on manipulatives for students to work with. Using differentiated instruction does not simply mean providing three different assignment options. In each case, there is "more to it than that." Yet too many practitioners develop their own practice based on an incomplete theoretical foundation. To a certain extent, this can actually undermine the intended power and impact of the original theory, contributing to the pendulum swings that too often characterize educational initiatives.

Through this essay readers are provided an overview of **perceptual theory**, one of the three theoretical foundations of invitational theory. Described by Purkey (1992) as "perceptual tradition" herein the word "theory" is intentionally retained to highlight that the approach *seeks to provide a theoretical explanation for human perception and resultant behavior*. In this context, it is a theory that informs how Invitational Education theory is practiced. There is great value for the educational community to better understand some of the key tenets of this theoretical approach. Therefore, readers are intentionally invited to gain a richer understanding of perceptual theory in relation to how it can inform and shape invitational practices.

A. How Perceptual Theory Explains Human Behavior

The psychology discipline has a rich history in seeking to understand and explain human behavior. *Why do people do the things they do?* Each person has their own way of looking at the world, and this has a direct bearing on their actions and decisions. If we want to understand human behavior, we need to understand why people do the things they do. In the culminating articulation of his theory, Combs (1999) points out, "People do not behave according to the facts as *others* see them. They behave according to the facts as *they* see them" (p. 19). Combs describes his approach as "perceptual" because it draws attention to the significant role individual perception plays when it comes to their behavior. All behavior is a symptom of perception.

Why We Need Theory

This essay began by acknowledging that theory, which by itself only has value if it leads to theory-informed practice. This is not meant to undermine the importance of a good theory. It is simply a reminder that for theory to have value, it must lead to action. The author frequently notes that people working in the helping professions are not always able to articulate the theoretical foundations that undergird their actions, informing their choices and serving as an important touchstone and guide for their decision-making processes. As observed by one of Magnuson's participants (2012) , this was perhaps one of Combs's greatest contributions:

> He provided that coherent body of understanding better than any stuff that I know. For me that's always been the most important contribution ever of perceptual psychology. It gives a coherent thorough underpinning to counseling practice, to teaching, to learning. (p. 47)

In a posthumous publication co-authored by Anne Richards, a former student and co-author of Combs noted, "The purpose of theory is to make it possible to deal effectively with problems" (Combs & Richards, 2010, p. 101). Perceptual theory precisely does this, providing a theoretical approach for understanding and dealing with human behavior.

Why Do People Do What They Do?

The scope of human history is replete with examples of the very strange and often inexplicable things people do. We often look back at events of the past and marvel at the ridiculous choices people made. Perceptual theory reminds us that every behavior makes sense to the behaver in the moment of behaving. Even the most illogical decisions made sense in the moment to the person making their decision. This distinction is an important one in seeking to understand and learn from human history. It is also very important for human relationships and interactions in the present.

The recent global COVID 19 pandemic has served as a powerful reminder of the fact that human beings behave in strange ways that, to them, makes sense. These behaviors can have a potent impact on relationships and the perceptions and behaviors of the people around them. For instance, differences of opinion over pandemic-related issues led to disagreements, significant tension, and even violence or increased death. Families were torn apart over disagreements about beliefs related to vaccinations and pandemic protocols. Responding to the pandemic became significantly politicized, sometimes driving a wedge through the heart of communities.

Throughout the pandemic, the author was struck by the fundamental role perception played in observed human behavior. It was evident that people's actions made sense to them based on their perceptions and beliefs. These observations inspired this current essay.

This writer believes Perceptual Theory has been historically overlooked for a variety of reasons. Perhaps, too few people know enough about perceptual theory. Yet, perceptual theory has a lot to offer in relation to understanding and responding to human behavior.

Humans live in an increasingly global, glocal, multicultural, and pluralistic interconnected culture. Philosophically speaking, many now believe that "reality" itself is *constructed*. Perceptually speaking, the way individuals understand and experience reality is *perceptual*. Given this context, you are invited to this re-introduction of perceptual theory as a resource for better understanding others' perspectives and why people do what they do.

All Behavior Makes Sense to the Behaver in the Moment of Behaving

A central tenet of Combs's theory is the recognition that every behavior makes sense to the person exhibiting the observed behavior within the context of the moment. This essential distinction is easily overlooked. Indeed, when we respond to the behavior of others, we often respond directly to the behavior, overlooking the fact that their behavior is a symptom of their perception. Crucially, there is a reason for what was done and it is important to recognize and consider the person's perspective of the context.

> From the point of view of the behaver herself, behavior is caused. It is purposeful. It always has a reason. Sometimes the reasons are vague and confused, in which case behavior is equally vague and uncertain; sometimes the meanings are extremely clear and definite. But everything we do seems reasonable and necessary at the time we are doing it. (Combs, 1999, p. 19)

Therefore, every behavior has a cause, emerging directly from the way the individual perceives reality. It is certainly possible that the individual may later recognize their behavior was inappropriate. But in the moment in which the behavior was exhibited, the actions made sense..

> Even our own behavior viewed in retrospect may seem to have been crazy, silly, or ineffective, *but at the instant of behaving* our actions seem to us to be the best and most effective ones we can carry out under the circumstances. (Richards, 2021, p. 21—italics in original).

The Individual's Perceptual Field and Its Impact on Others

Combs's theory has been described as a "field approach" because it suggests that each individual has a unique perceptual field. Fortunately, Combs (1999) describes this approach in further detail:

> A field is a device widely used in science to deal with forces or events that are not clearly understood and cannot be observed directly but nevertheless behave in observable, even predictable ways. A familiar example is the field of a magnet or electric current. Although we do not know the exact nature and dynamics of magnets or electric currents, we can work with them anyhow because they behave in observable and predictable fashion. The fact that an event can be utilized in an orderly way is sufficient to make it useful to modern science. Whatever its origin, the field of an organization has its own reality. That is to say, a field can be treated as an event in its own right and can be studied without reference to the material events that brought it into being. (p. 17)

Certainly recognition of the nature and impact of each person's unique perceptual field is a powerful resource for understanding individual human behavior. However, because our fields interact, it is also an essential consideration when seeking to understand human interactions.

> But unless I wish to believe that my own phenomenal field is the only thing that exists and that other people have no existence except as parts of it, I must believe that the phenomenal fields of any two individuals are somehow connected. In other words, changes in my own field are often accompanied by behavior on the part of others which indicates that a change has also take place in their phenomenonal fields. (Combs & Richards, 2010, p. 15)

Accepting this element of perceptual theory is quite significant for any system that seeks to explore individual human behavior and its impact on the behavior of others. Individually we have our own perceptions of reality. Since we share the same world, these collective realities intersect. As a result, individual perceptions and behaviors have the power to influence the perceptions and behaviors of others and vice versa.

Reading Behavior Backwards and the Legitimacy of Inference

Another central tenet of perceptual theory is that we can read behavior backwards in order to identify the perceptions that caused the behavior. It is far easier, of course, to simply respond to the behavior. However, it is important for people to learn to look beyond the surface behavior to identify and understand the causal perceptions.

> Observing other people's behavior (including, of course, what they have to say, which is a kind of behavior, too), we are able to make something of what they are

> feeling, and this makes it possible for us to understand something of the nature of the perceptual field that lies behind their actions. (Combs, 1999, pp. 65-66)

Applying perceptual theory requires the observer to make inferences, drawing conclusions about the underlying perceptions on the basis of observed behavior. The process of inferential learning has a rich legacy in the scientific community. By carefully observing the behavior of individuals over time, we are able to gain insights into the underlying perceptions that led to the behavior. It is important that this process be done wisely and strategically, not haphazardly. Richards (2021) points out that in perceptual theory, "this form of inference is termed **"reading behavior backwards"** and, when mindfully used, is a useful tool for understanding our own behavior as well as the behavior of others" (pp 26-27—boldface in original).

This process can provide reliable and legitimate data, provided we do so "with the same discipline, care, and rigor demanded of science in any other field of exploration" (Combs et al., 1969, p. 70). This distinction cannot be overlooked, as it is also possible to mis-apply this element. That can result in quickly drawing conclusions about other people's perceptions based on a superficial or incomplete observation of behaviors.

Influencing Behavioral Change

Perceptual theory stresses our goal is not to seek to control the behaviors of others. However, in some situations, we may be positioned to influence the behavior of others, which is appropriate in some relationships (particularly the "helping relationships" that often applied Combs's theory, as we shall see in a moment). Reading behavior backwards allows the observer to draw inferences from what they see. Combs (1999) wrote, "through the use of inference from people's behavior it is often possible to obtain valuable insights into the nature of persons. That understanding, in turn, makes it possible to construct appropriate strategies for effecting behavior change" (p. 66). Of course, the key is to position the individual to willingly change the perception, which typically leads to a change in behavior. It is also essential that the goal of a helping practitioner support the goal for self-actualization and opportunity to flourish.

Self-As-Instrument

Providing opportunities for individuals to make changes in their behavior is a central focus for the helping professions, which include teaching, nursing, social work, and counseling. Such professionals often apply Combs's theory, recognizing the pivotal distinction between perception and behavior as essential for helping individuals change the way they *look* at the world, which, in turn, changes the way they *act* within the world.

Relying upon their own perceptions and expertise, Combs and Soper (1963) coined the term *self-as-instrument* to describe the process by which an observer applies the reading behavior backward process. As Richards (2021) notes, "the primary tool that helpers work with is themselves" (p. 17). To makes the link between the term and the theory it serves, Combs and Richards (2010) stressed:

> "the essence of successful professional work is itself a matter of the use of the self as an effective instrument, rather than questions of methods or information. But whether or not workers are able to use themselves well as instruments in the helping professions is also a function of the helpers' own perceptions." (p. 59)

The Perceptions of Effective Helpers

One of the most important insights that emerges from perceptual theory research was the identification of perceptions of effective helpers. Effectiveness is identified in contrast to the perceptions of those who are deemed not effective. Practitioners of perceptual theory have been careful to distinguish between knowledge, methods, and perceptions. The assumption often is that a helping professional's knowledge or methods make the difference. Combs's research and theory shows that this is not the case. What ultimately makes the difference is the perceptions of the helping professional, which also shapes how knowledge is used and applied as methodology. Richards (2021) summarized four primary perceptions:

- **Perceptions of Self** as **identified** or deeply and meaningfully-related to persons of every description rather than as **unidentified** or apart from others.
- **Perceptions of Others** as **able** or having the capacities to deal with their problems and make their own decisions rather than as **unable** to do so.
- **Perceptions of Purpose** in terms of **larger** implications and concerns rather than **smaller**, narrower, or more specific goals.
- **Perceptions in an overall Frame of Reference** reflecting primary concern for the personal experiences of **people** and their welfare as human beings rather than impersonal matters or **things**, such as order, management details, and mechanics (Wasicsko, Wirtz, & Resor, 2009, p. 26). (pp. 28-29)

B. Considering Why Perceptual Theory is Often Overlooked

Perceptual Theory is primarily rooted in the work of Art Combs, a psychologist who initially introduced the theory as a needed counterbalance to behaviorist explanations of human behavior in the 1950s and 1960s. Although his work received some uptake at the time, for the most part it was rejected by the behaviorist-dominated profession of psychology of his era, something that I believe still influences the reception of his theory today. As a result, Combs eventually shifted his focus to a variety of helping professions (e.g., therapists, counsellors, teachers, and pastors) who drew heavily on his theory, often with striking results. Many of his subsequent publications focused on the helping professions. Combs's work was particularly well-received in education, resulting in a number of leadership opportunities. Toward the end of his life, Combs returned to his original discipline with a final publication (Combs, 1999) that pulled together a lifetime of work with perceptual theory.

1. Introducing Perceptual Theory to the World of Psychology

> When Combs began his work, behaviorist approaches dominated the discipline. Most psychologists typically examined behavior externally, from the point of view of an outside observer. The interaction of stimulus and response was the primary dynamic by which psychology sought to explain behavior and personality. For a young science eagerly straining for recognition as a legitimate discipline, that frame of reference had much to commend it. Stimuli and response could be observed directly and measured with high degrees of precision. (Combs & Richards, 2006, p. 87)

However, Combs also observed that a "discipline limited to external observation cannot deal effectively with such matters as emotion, motivation, feelings, attitudes, hopes, fears, desires, aspirations, or personal experience, the very qualities that make us human" (Combs & Richards,

2006, p. 87). Combs appreciated the rich history of the discipline, particularly for its ability to describe general patterns of human behavior. However, Combs was concerned that it did not sufficiently explain individual human behavior.

In the 1940s, Combs discovered the work of Donald Syngg (1941), which encouraged him to recognize the potential for an alternative to the behaviorist paradigm.

> Over 80 years ago, Donald Snygg (1941), expressing his own concerns about the state of theory and research in psychology, pointed out that psychologists had failed to appreciate that behavior could be studied from two different frames of reference: objectively, from the point of view of an outside observer; or "from the point of view of the behaving organism itself" (p. 406). Looking at people from the outside, as though they were objects, you might come up with particular understandings or conclusions. But, seeking to put yourself in their shoes and looking at the world as they see it, you were likely to arrive at very different conclusions. (Richards, 2021, p. 14)

Eventually, the two collaborated, leading to their first theoretical publication, entitled, "Individual behavior: A new frame of reference for psychology" (Snygg & Combs, 1949). Their revised edition (Combs & Snygg, 1959) described their theory as a "perceptual approach to behavior." The third edition, written by Combs and two of his students (Combs, Richards, & Richards, 1976) refers to the theory as "Perceptual psychology: A humanistic approach to the study of persons." The potentially confusing change in labels were later acknowledged. "During the years since it was initially proposed, the frame of reference it described has been referred to by varying names (e.g., a 'personal,' 'phenomenological,' 'perceptual,' 'perceptual-experiential,' or a 'field' approach)" (Combs & Richards, 2006, p. 3.)

2. The Emerging Humanistic Paradigm

Magnuson (2012) suggests that "Combs was among the first theorists to offer a bridge between the polarized beliefs of the humanists and the behaviorists" (p. 40). When perceptual theory was introduced in the 1940s, it faced fierce opposition from the behaviorist tradition. However, when psychology began to leave behaviorism behind in the 1970s, perceptual theory was again sidelined, because people did not want to lock themselves into another overarching theoretical system.

> The psychology profession was slowly shifting across the spectrum from a behavioristic frame of reference to a more humanistic orientation. The progress, however, was very slow. Most humanist psychologists were more certain about what they were against than how their concerns and efforts were associated with a theoretical framework. They turned away from behaviorism with such determination as to reject any suggestion of becoming involved with anything that smacked of a theoretical system or school of thought." (Combs and Richards, (2006, p. 230)

From this side of the historical narrative, however, we can see that Combs was part of a coalescing humanistic paradigm. Combs & Richards (2006) note that "Similar stirrings toward a more humanistic approach to human problems were occurring in other disciplines as well, especially in anthropology, sociology, political science, theology, and medicine" (p. 87). Eventually, this new paradigm was described as the humanistic movement. Magnuson (2012) note

that “Even though Combs’s presence in the founding of humanistic psychology, counseling, and education was prominent, his name rarely appears in contemporary literature” (p. 34). Boeree (1998) offers a partial suggestion, noting that

> Sometimes, a theory fails to gain the attention it deserves because it is too simple, too clear, too practical. Snygg and Combs' theory is a good example. Although it has had a quiet impact on a number of humanists, it didn't have the "pizzazz" other theories did. (para. 1)

3. Shifting to the Helping Professions

After struggling with the opposition of the discipline for a number of years, Combs finally realized that the behaviorist mindset was too firmly entrenched to objectively consider other approaches, including his own focus on individual behavior and perception. However, his theory had been well-received by people involved in the helping professions, such as teaching, counseling, social work, nursing, public service, and pastoral ministry. Combs (1999) notes that his approach “was widely used by applied workers, but largely ignored by theoretical and academic psychologists” (p. vii). Recognizing that the helping professions were not only using his theory, but were seeing significant positive outcomes, Combs shifted his focus to the helping professions (Combs, Avila, & Purkey, 1971), particularly education (Combs et al., 1969). As Richards and Gonzalez (2000) note, Combs was recognized by the American Psychological Association for “ground-breaking contributions to psychological theory, education reform, and research in the helping professions” (p. 1150).

4. Focused research in education

Combs’s shift from the discipline of psychology to applying his theoretical work in the field of education occurred when the program he had developed at Syracuse University was closed down, prompting him to move to Florida Statue University. In Combs and Richards (2006), Combs described this significant transition:

> When I moved from Syracuse to Florida, I shifted energies from the development and dissemination of theory to the applications of perceptual thinking for education. This was partly due to the rejection from psychologists that I experienced in the destruction of our program at Syracuse. It was also a function of the warm reception accorded perceptual-experiential thinking throughout education, which assuaged my sense of injury on one hand and encouraged my work in education on the other. (p. 220)

Combs and his colleagues began to extend the implications of his theoretical work to the characteristics of effective teachers. Initially, they assumed that teacher knowledge was a key element in distinguishing between effective and ineffective educators. This did not prove to be the case. So they shifted their focus to instructional methods. But this, too, was not successful. Instead, they discovered that the key difference between effective and ineffective teachers was teacher perceptions. This transition was described by Magnuson (2012):

> A hallmark of Combs’s research related to identification of excellent teachers’ qualities and the best practices for educating young minds. He and his colleagues began the investigation with the assumption that knowledge was an essential difference between effective and ineffective teachers. However, they found minimal difference in the knowledge base of the two groups. Their second

> hypothesis was that methods were the significant factor. Again, they were not able to identify effective teachers and ineffective teachers by observing methods. Thus, they focused their inquiry on unobservable factors such as the participants' beliefs (Siu-Runyon, 2000). Differences between effective and ineffective teachers became readily apparent when they examined these personal qualities. (pp. 39-40)

5. Perceptions of Effective Helpers

Recognizing that teacher effectiveness could be distinguished on the basis of teacher perceptions proved to be a watershed moment for perceptual theory. Combs and his colleagues (1969) developed a number of research studies focused on refining and clarifying this important distinction. They discovered that effective teachers can be distinguished by "their **perceptions**, especially those we call values, beliefs, and purposes" (Combs et al., 1971, p. 6—boldface in original). As noted earlier, these include:

(1) perceptions of self (as identifying or not identifying with others),
(2) perceptions of others (as capable or incapable of making their own choices),
(3) perceptions of purpose (as large or small in scope), and perceptions of an overall frame of reference or worldview (either focusing primarily on people or on things).

Each of these perceptions is distinct and has a marked impact on behavior. Other studies by Combs and his colleagues explored the nature and impact of effective and ineffective practitioners in the various helping professions. For example, Combs and Gonzalez (1994) recognized that these same characteristics distinguished between effective and ineffective counselors, ministers, nurses, and managers. Combs himself noted "in later years I was to extend this hypothesis to make a case for the essential unity of all helping professions." (Combs & Richards, 2006, p. 92)

The perceptions of effective helpers identified by Combs and particularly the distinction that effectiveness is based on the helper's perceptions rather than their knowledge or methods is foundational to an Invitational Education approach. This is something that continues to confound the discourse in many disciplines, where the assumption is often made that helper knowledge or helper methods are what matter most. Although often overlooked or under-valued, the research of Combs and his colleagues proved helper perceptions truly make a difference.

6. Returning to Psychology

As noted earlier, Art Combs and his crowning achievement, the articulation of perceptual theory as a resource for better understanding human behavior, have been historically under-recognized and underappreciated. As noted earlier, this essay serves as a means for re-introducing perceptual theory to modern readers. As a pioneer of Invitational Education (IE) theory, Purkey (1992) acknowledges Combs and Perceptual Theory as part of IE's conceptual framework.

We all know, timing is everything. Part of the reason Combs and his work related to Perceptual Theory has been overlooked is because his theoretical work was developed and evolved at a time when the behaviorist tradition had a stranglehold on theoretical explanations of human behavior. Another element is that he left the discipline and explored the application of his theory exclusively in the helping profession. However, clearly Combs longed for his theory to be recognized within the discipline of psychology. The APA's belated recognition of his landmark work in the helping professions (Richards & Gonzalez, 2000) certainly accorded some posthumous recognition and respect.

Combs himself hoped for more. He believed that his theoretical work provided important insights into individual human behavior that could be applied across the discipline. Before the end of his life, Combs (1999) believed that the changing landscape in psychology provided an opportunity for this to happen:

> With the collapse of behaviorism, psychology is in need of a comprehensive theoretical framework capable of bringing together the work of its scientists and those practicing in the applied fields of human activity. I believe the time is ripe for a more general application of field theory in the profession, and this book is my contribution to that end. (p. viii)

Combs' perception (1999) resulted in his explication of three reasons that supported his belief:

(1) The failure of behaviorism to adequately serve as a way of understanding and explaining human behavior.
(2) The very real needs of workers in applied fields to understand the causes of human behavior.
(3) The increased use of field theory in modern science, which allows for the positing of field-based explanations for what is otherwise unobservable, could be extended to the field of psychology.

Indeed, Combs' theoretical framework has the potential to pull together many different threads in the emerging discourse:

> calling attention to the paradigm shift of psychology from behaviorism to self psychology, humanistic psychology, phenomenological, etc. All are based on a common thread: a perceptual field view. I am suggesting the profession takes steps to dialogue and explore perception as a basis for all psychology. (Combs & Richards, 2006, p. 306)

7. Direct Impacts of Interest to the Invitational Community

Combs took his relationships with his students seriously and provided many opportunities for them to contribute to the emergence of perceptual theory through their own research and projects. The Invitational Education community will especially find three specific initiatives to be note-worthy. Mark Wasicsko's (cf., 2005, 2007, etc.) exploration of the dispositions of effective teachers, Anne Richards's (2021) contribution to the mediation discourse, and William Purkey and John Novak's (cf., 1978, 1992, 2015, 2020, etc.) articulation of Invitational Theory. Each author wase a student of Art Combs. His imprint can be clearly seen in their subsequent work. Each will be further explored below:

Wasicsko's Work on Dispositions of Effective Teachers

As noted, Mark Wasicsko studied under Combs. Wasicsko continued to expand and develop Combs's research into teacher perceptions. Wasicsko has shifted the language slightly, exploring the *dispositions* of effective teachers, building directly on the *perceptions* identified by Combs and his colleagues. As Richards (2021) notes,

> During the past two decades, Perceptual theory has been used extensively as a basis for exploring helping professionals' *dispositions* (attitudes and beliefs) as well as for selecting candidates for admission to licensure and advanced degree programs

> in education (Wasicsko, 2005, 2007; Wasicsko et al., 2009; Allen, Wasicsko, & Chirichello, 2014). (p. 30)

Richards's Work on Perceptions and Mediation

Anne Richards, who studied under Combs and, along with her husband, co-authored two of the editions of Combs's theory (Combs, Richards, & Richards, 1976; Combs, Richards, and Richards, 1988), has also continued to advance perceptual theory and the legacy of Art Combs. Richards (2021) explores the mediation discourse, building on Combs's identification of the perceptions of essential helpers. Richards (2021) notes that, as has been the case in other disciplines, in seeking to explain mediator effectiveness, the mediation discourse has often focused "on examining strategies, techniques, methods, or behaviors of mediators in their practice of mediation. Unfortunately, research along these lines has not produced results distinguishing which practices are reliably associated with mediator effectiveness" (p. x). In her monograph, Richards explores perceptual theory and draws attention to the need to focus on mediator perceptions. Mediator behaviors – the strategies, techniques, and methods employed – are clearly rooted in mediator perceptions. Richards (2021) notes, "it seems likely that greater success will be found by grounding future research on mediator effectiveness in theory focusing on exploration of the perceptions mediators bring to their work" (p. x). Importantly, Richards (2021) concludes her monography by noting that

> Perceptual psychological theory, with its accompanying inferential methodology for research purposes, appears to show greater promise for determining the effectiveness of mediators than past studies have yet achieved or may be capable of achieving in the future. (p. 35)

Purkey and Novak's Work on Invitational Theory

Without their conceptual and theoretical contributions, Invitational Theory and Invitational Education would not exist. Purkey and Novak both studied under Combs and consistently identified the perceptual tradition as one of the three foundations of Invitational Theory (cf. Purkey, 1978; Purkey, 1992; Purkey & Novak, 2015, Purkey, Novak, & Fretz, 2020). Recognizing the nature and implications of Combs's work provides an important theoretical foundation and key conceptions that serve as a touchstone and guide for practitioners of Invitational Education theory.

C. Perceptual Psychology Basics

This writer experienced several opportunities to introduce perceptual theory to others in a variety of settings. While a longer introduction such as this document can play an important role in establishing context and exploring the historical roots and narrative of the theory, it should be helpful to focus on "Perceptual Theory Basics" (Figure 1). In this section, we further explore each of the basics.

Figure 1: *Perceptual Theory Basics*

- All behavior is a symptom of perception
- Every behavior makes sense to the behaver in the moment of behaving
- If you want to change behavior, you need to shift perceptions
- It is not about controlling others, but positioning others to control themselves and to flourish
- All people can find their own best way, provided they have access to needed information and obstacles are removed.
- We too easily over-focus on behavior and under-focus on perception
- You can read behavior backwards to identify the perceptions that caused it
- All learning is perceptual differentiation
- Learning requires engagement (e.g., cognitive, emotional, relational), not experience

1. All behavior is a symptom of perception

To a certain extent, this statement captures perceptual theory in a nutshell. All human behavior is rooted in the beliefs (both articulated and unarticulated) held by the individual. As we will note in a moment, this means that a discerning observer can discern beliefs from behavior.

2. Every behavior makes sense to the behaver in the moment of behaving

This is another easily-overlooked element in human behavior. People do very strange things, and we can ascribe many things to others on the basis of their actions. However, in the moment of action, the chosen behavior seemed like the most appropriate response, based on their in-the-moment perceptions. As noted earlier, it is not uncommon for someone to realize the error of their ways (or the stupidity of their decisions) moments later. But at the time, their actions made sense to them.

3. If you want to change behavior, you need to shift perceptions

To a large extent, this is the most important element of the theory, provided appropriate checks and balances are in play. When others are consistently acting in unacceptable or inappropriate ways, the theory explains how a change in behavior can take place. The key is not to focus on the behavior itself, but to address the underlying perceptions. A change in perception will often be followed by a change in behavior. Such changes are often permanent, because the individual no longer sees the world in the same way.

4. It is not about controlling others, but positioning others to control themselves and to flourish

In the context of the previous point, this is a key caveat. It is certainly possible to abuse the insights of perceptual theory, controlling the perceptions of others so that you can also exert control over their behavior. In addition to being immoral and unethical, this also directly contradicts the heart of Combs's work. Drawing on similar foundations as Combs's colleagues and contemporary, Abraham Maslow (1954), the entire theory is rooted in a vision for self-actualization, for providing a context for optimal human development and flourishing. This is likely why the helping professions have often been drawn to Combs's work. It is imminently respectful of human capacity

and potential. It creates the conditions for people to take control of their own lives, and to flourish and thrive.

5. All people can find their own best way, provided they have access to needed information and obstacles are removed

Combs's theory is very optimistic when it comes to human behavior and the capacity for growth and development. Humans are truly capable of amazing things. However, Combs's theory is also very realistic. Part of the reason the helping professions were drawn to his theory is that it provides a theoretical foundation that is **both** optimistic and realistic. Human experience can be very messy and complicated. And many individuals live in conditions that significant limit and impede their growth and development. The theory reminds us that people are capable of finding their own best way. But they can only do so when they are able to access the information they need, and when the things that limited and impede are removed. This is, of course, a challenging process.

6. We too easily over-focus on behavior and under-focus on perception

This element is one of the key insights that drew me to the theory. In my experience as an educator, I and many other teachers, often over-focused on student behavior (e.g., misbehavior) and did not sufficiently recognize or attend to the underlying perceptions. And yet when I shifted my classroom management processes to see past the behavior and to respectfully seek to discern the perceptions that caused it, I saw incredible, even transformational results. In some cases, my students told me that previous teachers only "saw" the misbehavior, not the human being with a formative underlying story. I have since come to realize that this insight transfers far beyond education. This happens all the time: someone acts in a way that makes us uncomfortable, and we respond to their behavior. In some cases, we don't spare a thought on the fact that there is likely a reason they are acting the way they do. Combs's theory reminds us that this omission is potentially transformational.

7. You can read behavior backwards to identify the perceptions that caused it

This has already been explored at length earlier in this essay. But it is also an important insight for introducing perceptual theory. With time, reflection, and experience, we can train ourselves (or be trained by others) to read behavior backwards in order to identify the causal perceptions. This is not as easy as it sounds. It is not uncommon for people to immediately assume they know why someone is doing what they are doing. Reading behavior backwards is only truly effective, however, when our inferential work is rooted in careful attention and empathy. We need to discern how the individual looks at the world. It is not enough for us to determine how we would look at the world if we were in their shoes.

8. All learning is perceptual differentiation

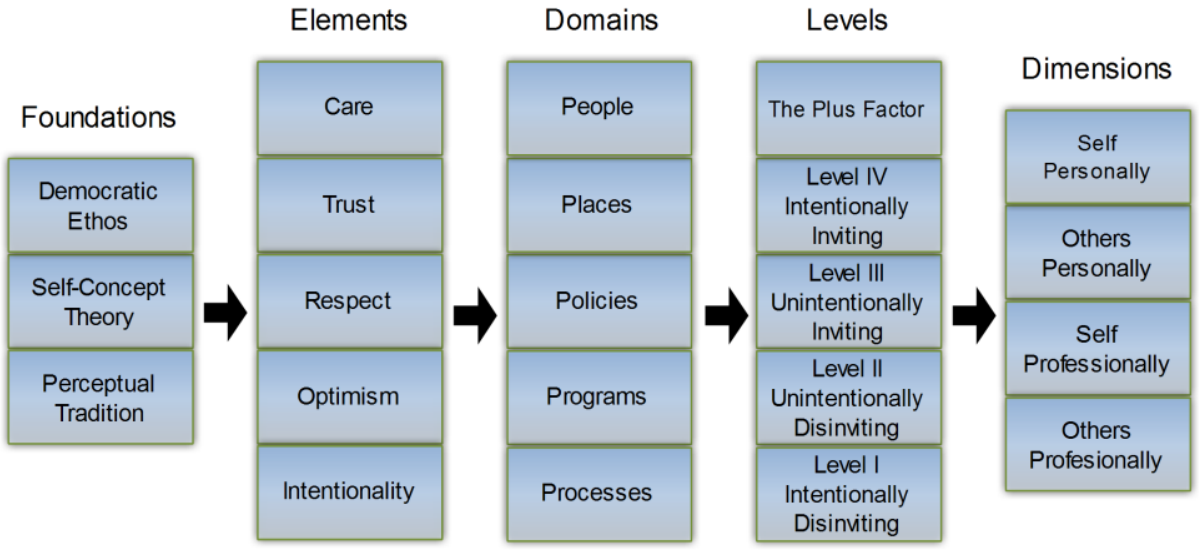
Combs's work is richly rooted in the science of perception. Cognitive research reminds us that human beings are constantly exposed to raw sensation (sights, sounds, smells, tastes, etc.). Martinez (2010) describes the incredible array of sense data as "sensory storm" (p. 61), and the system by which our brain receives and interprets sensory input as the "sensorium" (p. 61). Our brains process the overwhelming amount of sense detail by rapidly moving from initial sensation to selective perception and attention, filtering through the sense data in order to determine what

needs to be retained and remembered. This has enormous ramifications for teaching and learning in all contexts, including in education. We learn by differentiating some perceptions from other possible perceptions. This process of growth and development, rooted in perceptual differentiation, is how we learn.

9. Learning requires engagement, not experience (cognitive, emotional, relational)

Because learning is the result of perceptual differentiation, it requires engagement, not just experience. As students of Dewey have learned, we don't learn from *experience*. We learn from *reflecting on experience*. We are constantly surrounded by sensation, and our brains need to narrow our focus in order to attend on relevant and meaningful sense data. It is not enough to simply experience our sensations. We need to attend to and engage with our experience. As Combs (Combs Richards, & Richards, 1976) notes, "Out of all the things we *might* perceive, we perceive what is meaningful to us and what helps us to maintain the organization of our phenomenal self and thereby to satisfy our fundamental need" (p. 65).

Figure 2: *Invitational Theory* (Purkey & Novak, 2015, p.1)



D. Implications and Applications

The purpose of this essay is based on the author's perception that Comb's Perceptual Theory, has been overlooked and undervalued. The desired outcome is to re-introduce practitioners of Invitational Education theory to Combs's work because it is one of the three theoretical foundations that underpin Invitational Education theory. Given this, the IE community should recognize and draw upon the insights of the perceptual tradition. At the heart of Combs's vision was a vision for individual self-actualization and flourishing. As noted, this vision played a foundational role in the development of Invitational Education theory, which focuses upon both individual and community flourishing whereby others are intentionally invited to flourish and promote the flourishing of others. Focusing upon the inviter's and invitee's perceptions play a fundamental role in advancing the invitational paradigm (see Figure 2 above).

1. Perceptual Theory Provides a Theoretical Basis for Understanding Others

Combs's work provides a solid theoretical basis for understanding others, which is one of the most invitational, respectful, and hospitable things one person can do for another. The theory has been effectively applied in a host of helping fields and relationships, including teacher and students, social workers, therapists, nurses, caregivers and their clients, and supervisors, leaders, and administrators and their colleagues. When the helper truly seeks and supports the wellbeing and flourishing of the helpee, lives are often fundamentally changed. When an entire community is characterized by it invitational ethos, true transformation can occur.

2. Perceptual Theory Matters to the Invitational Community Because it is Part of Our Foundations

Along with *self-concept theory* and a *democratic ethos*, Perceptual Theory should matter to the invitational community given it is part of IE's Theoretical foundations (see Figure 2). As such, it forms the heart of Invitational Education theory. Recognizing the profound relationship between perceptions and behavior can position practitioners of IE theory to foster an inviting community that supports the self-actualization and flourishing of all community members. An inviting stance is rooted in perceptions that support flourishing, but also commits to attending and responding to the perceptions of others.

3. Perceptual Theory and the Five Elements of an Inviting Stance

As noted in Figure 2, Purkey and Novak (2015) identified five interdependent elements of an inviting stance, *Intentionality, Care, Optimism, Respect, Trust* (ICORT). Each ICORT elements has significant potential for shaping an invitational mindset. Each of these elements is distinctively perceptual. The inviter and the invited need to perceive and respond to each interdependent element in order for them to truly be experienced and impactful.

4. Perceptual Theory and the Five Domains of an Inviting Community

Invitational theory focuses on five specific domains that contribute to the success or failure of all members of a community or organization (see Figure 2). Often described as "The Five Ps" (Purkey & Novak, 2015), *people*, *places*, *policies*, *programs*, and *processes*, these five domains collectively serve as a n institutional area for assessing and developing and supporting the flourishing of community members. Once again, perceptual theory can play a valuable role in determining how individuals perceive and respond to each domain of IE theory. Indeed, the intentional application of perceptual theory may actually position observers to see past the surface of behavior to the fundamental perceptions of community stakeholders.

5. Perceptual Theory and the Four Levels of Functioning

The continuum of the levels of functioning (Purkey & Novak, 2015), from *intentionally disinviting*, *unintentionally disinviting*, *unintentionally inviting*, and *intentionally inviting* (see Figure 2) rests heavily on recognizing the distinct impact of the perceptions of the inviter and invited. Indeed, a focus on reading behavior backwards to the underlying perceptions of key stakeholders may yield incisive and difference-making insights. This may provide needed resources and data that can allow practitioners to advance to higher levels of functioning, increasing the inviting experience for others.

The levels of functioning culminate with what Purkey and Novak (2015) describe as *"The Plus Factor"* (p. 1). The theorists write:

> Invitational Theory, at its best, works like magic. Those who function at the highest levels of inviting become so fluent over time that the carefully honed skills and techniques they employ, are invisible to the untrained eye. They function with such talented assurance that the tremendous effort involved does not call attention to itself. (p. 6)

In many ways, the Plus Factor describes an aspiration that requires fully enacting perceptual theory, where truly focusing on the perceptions, self-actualization, and flourishing of others is simply part of the community experience—as natural as the air we breathe. In such a context, *"The Plus Factor"* can appear to happen effortlessly and naturally.

6. Perceptual Theory and the Four Dimensions

As noted in Figure 2, Purkey and Novak (2015) identified four dimensions of human functioning:

- being personally inviting to self,
- being personally inviting to others,
- being professionally inviting to self, and
- being professionally inviting with others

Here, too, perceptual theory, with its focus on both perception and behavior, plays a significant role in allowing an individual to flourish in each dimension, forcing them to build from the roots of perception to the behaviors that result.

7. The Perceptions of the Inviter and the Invited

A key strength of perceptual theory is that it requires leaders and community members to be able to look past behavior and focus on underlying perceptions. This intentionality and authenticity matters a great deal. As we have seen, a change in perception is often accompanied by a change in behavior. Whether an invitation is extended or received is completely perceptual. It starts with the perceptions and intentions of the inviter, which then leads to an inviting action or behavior. This is then received as a perception or experience by the invited, which, depending on how the invitation is perceived, may then impact subsequent behavior.

This has significant implications for IE leaders seeking to improve institutional climate and optimize success. Intentional invitations and actions are necessary, but not sufficient. It is imperative that IE leaders also pay close attention to how community member perceive invitations and what behavior result.

Conclusion

As noted at the outset, Perceptual Theory has been overlooked. Certainly, not enough people are aware of the theory and its significant implications for understanding human behavior. As a foundational basis for Invitational Educational (IE) theory, IE advocates need to recognize and draw upon this theoretical foundation that so richly resonates and informs IE theory. Combs's approach to understanding individual human behavior and his theory's insights into human relationships and interactions that can profoundly inform our own perceptions and behaviors. Through my own leadership work and observations of others, this writer has been significantly shaped by the growing awareness of the nature and power of perceptual theory. In reflecting upon the legacy of Art Combs, Richards observed:

> Consistently, the ideas he shared helped others grasp important perspectives for better understanding persons, being more effective professionals, and developing fulfilling human relationships. He often reminded us of things we already knew to be the case – but had somehow overlooked or set aside, to our detriment. (Combs & Richards, 2010, ix)

A participant in Magnuson's (2012) study provided an apt conclusion: "And, you know what? Art's whispering in my ear. 'Know this. People act in the ways that seem to make the most sense to them at that time'" (p. 47). As a result of this essay, may you also hear Art whispering in your ear!.

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"Start Dancin' and Don't Stop"

Chapters 1 &2

Kate Null Asbill, Ed.D.

Chapter 1: Intentionally Invite Yourself to Live Better Longer

Essie, age 92, hopped out of my car and quickly hurried up the handicapped ramp on her way to vote. She carried her cane, but hardly used it. I always had the feeling she carried it in case she wanted to whack someone. She would often "park" it somewhere and walk off without it – forgetting her need for the balance provided by the walking stick. After observing my dear friend and analyzing her actions, I said, "Essie, you did something right. What did you do to be in such good shape at 92? Did you exercise?"

"Oh, yeh," she said, smiling as she remembered. "Me and Mary Jane used to go line dancing over at San Jose Senior Center – and when we finished there, we went to Northgate and danced some more!"

My passing observations of Essie's ability to maneuver easily at an advanced age prompted me to go on a quest to discern the secrets of pro-active aging. I began to think about aging with intention and how, perhaps, we can age less.

Since that conversation with precious little Essie, I've given a lot of thought to the aging process, and I am certain that we have a choice of how we are going to age.

After interviewing and observing many admired elders, I am convinced that daily decisions we make throughout our lives can determine both the quality and length of our days on earth.

Much has been written about aging, and my on-going research on the subject confirms my belief that there are things we can do to live better longer – to live well.

Aging is a timely topic that is of interest to "baby boomers" and those below and beyond that age group. As one doctor told me, "The information is out there; the research is in. People just have to follow it." We all know better than we do. The challenge is to get ourselves to do it.

My purpose in writing this book is to distill some of that ocean of information into doable daily actions.

My interest in pro-active aging actually began many years ago when I was in high school. After visiting with my grumpy, sad-faced Grandpa, I told Mama, "I'm going to sleep smiling so that when I get old I'll have an up mouth." For a while I was intentional about going to sleep with a smile on my face. I've never forgotten that decision to cultivate a cheerful countenance and now, at 60+, at least I have "happy wrinkles."

It was twenty years later before I discovered the secret of INTENTIONALITY, but it is a subject that has impacted my life since 1985. At that time, I met Dr. William Purkey and embraced

his philosophy of Invitational Education. That summer I attended my first conference of the Alliance for Invitational Education, and I soon came to the realization the IE encompassed much more than education. I thought, "What they are really talking about is INTENTIONAL INVITATIONAL LIVING." It is not something you turn on and off at the school house door. It is a way of life, a way of being, a way of relating to everyone you meet. I felt as if I had plugged into the mainstream of people who thought as I did about inviting school success, about how schools should be, and most importantly, about how to live.

I became active in the Alliance for Invitational Education and began to share that philosophy with anyone who would listen. I purposefully applied the concepts to my personal life as well.

In the book, Inviting School Success, by Dr. William Purkey and Dr. John Novak, the authors outline the tenets of Invitational Education. The basic stance is one of trust, respect, optimism, and INTENTIONALITY. 1 Although I had not heard the word intentionality before 1985, it soon became a guiding force in my life – both personally and professionally.

Intentionality is the process of making a conscious choice to behave in a certain manner. Dr. Purkey says that is it about **"life being aware of itself."** When we give conscious thought to our actions, and to the possible consequences of our actions, we can make better decisions. When we become aware of how we want our lives to be, we can make better choices.

Before Grandpa suffered a debilitating stroke that left him unable to speak, he once said, "If I'd have known I was gonna live this damn long I would have taken better care of myself." We have probably all heard of someone who has made a similar statement. The reason for that is because of the truth it contains. If we choose to take better care of ourselves, we significantly increase our chances of LIVING BETTER LONGER. We do have a choice in the matter. We can intentionally invite ourselves to live better longer and to age less – to thrive and not just survive!

Gui**DANCE**: What intentional actions will you choose today to better care for yourself?

Chapter 2: "Start Dancin' and Don't Stop!"

Because of my conversation with lively little Essie, I decided to join line dancing at the Senior Citizen Center. It is great exercise; the fellowship is fabulous, and it's fun! It has been part of my weekly schedule for nine years now, and I am reaping the benefits of dancing regularly.

I have met some wonderful women there. I'll never forget the day I met Mary Jane.

We were standing in the hall during the break, and I asked her name. She told me, and then asked mine.

I told her, "Kate Asbill," and she said, "Oh! My friend Essie used to talk about you!" I quickly replied, "What did you say your name was?" "Mary Jane." I was so excited!

"Oh my gosh! It's YOU!" I exclaimed. "Essie told me how you used to go line dancing together, and you're still here!!" Essie had been dead for about a year at that point in time.

Mary Jane and I quickly became friends, and I was happy every time I saw her stroll into the senior center.

She may have been late, but she was still there! Still dancing! She had rhythm, and she was smooth on her feet. If she didn't know the steps, she just kept moving to the music. I believe there is a lot to be said for SHOWING UP! But, Mary Jane didn't just show up! She always had a good time, and she was an excellent example for me and for anyone else who was paying attention.

Mary Jane didn't discuss age. She said, "Age is just a number, and mine is unlisted!" I told her, "I've heard that age is 'mind over matter.' If you don't mind, it doesn't matter."

When she passed away, several of us were curious to see if her age would be listed in her obituary. It was. We finally found out that our little "line dancing queen" lived to be 98 years of age. By our calculations, she still showed up and danced regularly until she was 97! What a woman!

I decided to dedicate this book to my dear dancing friends, Essie and Mary Jane. The idea for the title came from a conversation with another favorite friend, Reid. He was telling me that one of his older friends had passed away. He said, "I wish you could have interviewed her." I asked, "What do you think she would have told me?" He smiled and said, "Start dancin' and don't stop!"I think Essie and Mary Jane would agree.

I know my friend, Clayton, would too.

I met Clayton in a honky-tonk in Texas. It was New Year's Eve, and I went to the Broken Spoke in Austin with my Uncle Bobby and Aunt Maureen. Vernon was deer hunting with our grandson, Addison, so I had no dance partner. Uncle Bobby knew about my interest in older folks, and also that I like to two-step. Bobby spotted Clayton when he walked in, and signaled for him to come over to our table. He introduced us, and I could tell it was going to be a memorable New Year's Eve.

Clayton was 92 at that time, and he was quite a character. With a sparkle in his eye, he told me that he had a girlfriend, and then added, "She doesn't like to dance, but she doesn't care if I do." I danced with him several times that evening, and I took pictures of him dancing because I knew instantly that he was my new hero. He had fun posing for the photos. He danced "all night long" – looking for lovely ladies without a partner, and providing entertainment for everyone at the Broken Spoke.

About a year and a half later, I saw Clayton again. Vernon and I went to the South Austin Senior Center where Uncle Bobby and his band were playing. He had assembled a group of experienced musicians, and they had recently released a CD called "Still Swinging in Texas." As they played all the popular oldies, the dance floor was filled with senior citizens having fun – still swinging. Clayton was doing his best to make sure no one felt like a "wall flower." There was a line of ladies who were waiting to dance, and Clayton was doing what he could to keep them happy. He would take them out, one by one, for a spin around the dance floor. Although I had a partner that night, I did get to dance with Clayton and learn a little more about him. I couldn't keep him long though because the ladies were waiting. His girlfriend didn't know what she was missing.

There's a country music song that Lee Ann Womack sings that says it this way: "And if you get the choice to sit it out or dance, I hope you'll dance…"

I hope you'll dance. Be like Essie, Mary Jane, and Clayton – start dancin' and don't stop!

And, as William Purkey says, "Dance like nobody's watching!"

Gui**DANCE**: Are you sittin' it out or dancin'?

Dedication:

"Start Dancin' and Don't Stop" is dedicated to Essie Phillips and Mary Jane Cottingham, my "Dancing Queens," with appreciation for their inspiration and their example.

It is written with much love and gratitude in memory of my mother and daddy, Dollie and John Null, and my grandmother, Maw – Ovie Parker Lueders Blankenburg.

I thank each of the precious people who have helped me to learn about life and who have taught me much through their examples of lives well lived.

I am especially grateful to my mentor and dear friend, Dr. William Purkey, for all of the wisdom he has shared with me.

I thank my brother, Ronnie Null, for his assistance with editing and for his encouragement through the process of writing this book.

I thank my husband, Vernon Asbill, for his steadfast love and for being my partner in this wonderful dance of life.

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To purchase "Start Dancin' and Don't Stop," text Dr. Asbill at 575-302-1921.
Cost is $20, which includes tax and shipping.

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.

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