

Editorial—

The Complexity of Simplicity

One attractive characteristic of invitational theory is the simplicity of its language. Terms like "invitations," "disinvitations," "intentions," and "choices" are relatively easy to understand. William Purkey, John Novak, Paula Stanley, and others have pointed out that the basic concepts of the theory are easily understood, so much so that children can learn them. This simplicity is a nice attribute to have in a world where professions, such as education, become entrenched in seemingly foreign expressions and terminology. At the same time, there is risk in promoting a theory about human relationships that is commended as "easy."

Occasionally, people who hear of invitational theory for the first time are polarized. One group rejects it as "so simplistic" that it is useless. These people say, "It's fluff; simply do nice things and good things will happen." On the other pole, the audience enthusiastically embraces the simplicity, but sometimes these believers fail to search the depth of meaning the theory proposes for themselves or for society in general. Novak (1992) reminded us that an "enthusiastic battle cry" has its place, but without serious study, inquiry, and understanding a theory cannot be put into legitimate practice.

The simplicity of language adopted by invitational theory becomes more remarkable when we realize the complex ideas, relationships, and beliefs put forth in its philosophy. Understanding the basic concepts is relatively easy; putting them into practice and understanding their implications for institutions, society, and cultures is more challenging.

The experience of editing this journal has emphasized this issue for me as a follower of invitational theory. Reading manuscripts from authors and working with those accepted for publication, I have learned how individual perceptions and the language we use to express our views illustrate differences in our understanding of invitational theory and practice. This is a rich learning experience that I am honored to have received.

In this issue of the journal four articles illustrate the relevancy of the simplicity-complexity issue. First, William Purkey and Paula Stanley revisit the "blue card-orange card" metaphor. An easily understood comparison, this metaphor illustrates the power and intricacy of invitations.

A qualitative study of the influence of self-efficacy on students' writing performance is summarized by Frank Pajares. He links the findings with the self-concept assumptions of invitational theory, lending credence to the belief that inviting relationships can contribute to student achievement.

In the third article, Derenda Wiemer and William Purkey report on a study that investigated differences between invitations to self and others. Their findings indicate that people may be

more negative with themselves than they are towards others. If true, the authors suggest that schools may want to provide more opportunities for positive self-reflection.

The final article by Clayton Arceneaux offers an in-depth examination of trust, an essential ingredient of the inviting process. As with the metaphors used to explain invitational beliefs, trust often seems a simple enough concept. This article delves into the sources, situations, and circumstances that add complexity to trusting relationships.

John J. Schmidt
Editor

Reference

Novak, J. M (1992). Critical imagination for invitational theory, research and practice. *Journal of Invitational Theory and Practice*, 1 (2), 77-86.