

Love Thyself as Thy Neighbor?:

Self-Other Orientations of Inviting Behaviors

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One of the key components of the invitational model (Purkey, 1978; Purkey & Novak, 1984; Purkey Schmidt, 1987; Purkey & Stanley, 1991) is that individuals who are intentionally respectful, trusting, and optimistic towards both themselves and others, personally and professionally, are most likely to move towards optimal human growth and wellness. Actions that exhibit these qualities are known as "inviting" behaviors; while actions that devalue, dehumanize, or disrespect the self or others are known as "disinviting" behaviors (Purkey & Schmidt, 1987).

Behavior directed at oneself is closely tied to self-esteem. Self-esteem can be defined as confidence in one's abilities to think and cope, and confidence in one's rights to be happy, feel worthy assert needs, and appreciate accomplishments (Walz & Bleuer, 1992). Thus, by being intentionally inviting with themselves, individuals encourage their own self-esteem. By being intentionally inviting with others, individuals promote positive growth of fellow human beings.

However, all experience is filtered through an individual's perceptual world. People perceive an act as either inviting or disinviting based on their belief systems as well as the particulars of the situation (Schmidt, 1992). People may deal with others (in their expectations and evaluations) more in consideration of the particulars of a situation, while applying universal beliefs to themselves.

In this preliminary study two hypotheses were tested: 1) people will be more inviting to others than to themselves, and 2) people will be more disinviting to themselves than to others.

Method

Subjects

Undergraduate students attending a southeastern university participated in this study. The students came from a variety of academic disciplines and were enrolled in sections of Helping Skills and Career/Life Planning courses. A total of 171 questionnaires were distributed. Three questionnaires were incomplete so data from these were not included. Of the 168 subjects, 78% were female and 22% were male.

Instrument

A 20 item self-report questionnaire, named the *Inviting-Disinviting Index* (IDI), was developed by the researchers to measure the degree of inviting and disinviting behavior addressed to oneself and others (Appendix A). The IDI consists of two sets of 10 parallel statements. The wording of each pair is the same except for the change in self other reference. Each set contains five positive statements and five negative statements, for example:

Inviting to Self"

I congratulate myself on my successes."

Inviting to Others"

I congratulate others on their successes."

Disinviting to Self"

I neglect my own needs."

Disinviting to Others"

I neglect the needs of others."

The twenty statements were placed in random order on the IDI to void response bias (Appendix B). Subjects were asked to respond to each statement according to the frequency of occurrence on a Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (never) to 7 (always). Each IDI yielded raw scores with a possible range of 5 to 35 on these four variables: inviting to self (IS), inviting to others (IO), disinviting to self (DS), and disinviting to others (DO). Content validity of the IDI was tested by presenting it to a panel of ten helping professionals who have written about or conducted research on the invitational model. The ten reviewers were asked to code each of the twenty statements to assess behavior as: inviting to self (IS), inviting to others (IO), disinviting to self (DS), or disinviting to others (DO). The coding of the IDI by the panel of experts revealed an inter-rater reliability coefficient of 0.96.

Pilot Study

Counselor education graduate students attending the university during the fall of 1992 volunteered to participate in a pilot test of the IDI. Fifty-nine

IDI's were distributed. Four were returned incomplete so data from these were not included in the pilot study.

Of the 55 participants who returned completed IDI's, 71% were female and 29% were male. In the pilot study, 78% of the students reported higher scores for inviting behavior towards others than inviting behavior towards self. A total of 93% reported higher scores for disinviting behavior towards self than disinviting behavior towards others. Following this pilot study, procedures were established to sample a larger, more diverse population.

Procedures

The IDI's were distributed by the researchers to six sections of two undergraduate courses, entitled Helping Skills and Career/Life Planning. Participation in the study remained anonymous and voluntary. Students here asked to indicate their gender so that possible gender differences in the results could be investigated. The IDI took 5-10 minutes to complete, and participants returned the instrument to the researcher upon completion. Any IDI's that were incomplete (i.e., items not rated) were discarded.

The IDI's from 168 students were computer-scored, yielding raw scores for each of the four variables: IS (inviting self), IO (inviting others), DS (disinviting self), and DO (disinviting others). The mean score and standard deviation were calculated for each variable. T-tests were performed to compare the means. Also, percentages were calculated to determine the percent of respondents who scored higher on inviting to self than inviting to others ($IS > IO$), equal scores on inviting to self and inviting to others ($IS = IO$), and lower on inviting to self than inviting to others ($IS < IO$). Corresponding percentages were determined for disinviting scores (i.e., $DS > DO$, $DS = DO$, and $DS < DO$).

Results

Data from the 168 respondents are summarized in Table 1. The most significant difference was found between the disinviting self and disinviting others mean scores. The disinviting self mean score (DS) was 21.46 with a SD of 4.26. The disinviting others mean score (DO) was 14.98 with a SD of 3.74. A t-test found a significant difference between these two scores. ($t = 14.81$, 334 d.f., $p < .001$). Based on these results, the null hypothesis was rejected. The alternate hypothesis, that in the subject population there is a difference in self and other orientation, was supported. People tend to be more disinviting to themselves than they are to others.

A significant difference was also found between the inviting self and inviting others mean scores. The inviting self mean score (IS) was 23.77 with a SD of 4.06. The inviting others mean score (IO) was 27.55 with a SD of 2.90. A t-test yielded a significant difference between inviting self and inviting others mean scores ($t = -9.84, 303 \text{ d.f.}, p < .001$). This again rules out the null hypothesis that there is no difference in self or other orientation of inviting behaviors. This finding supports the alternative hypothesis that people tend to be more inviting to others than to themselves .

The difference between the mean scores for both inviting self/inviting others and disinviting self/disinviting others was compared for the male respondents and the female respondents separately. The results held true regardless of the sex of the respondent.

Table 1

Student Mean Raw Scores on Four Behavioral Orientations



Note: Maximum score = 35. Total sample N = 168; 37 males and 131 females.

To compare the self and other orientation of the sample population for both inviting and disinviting behaviors, percentages were calculated for the number of subjects scoring $IS > IO$, $IS = IO$, $IS < IO$, $DS > DO$, $DS = DO$, and $DS < DO$. For the total sample, 17.3% scored higher on inviting to self than inviting to others, 6.0% scored equal on inviting to self and others, and 76.8% scored higher on inviting to others than inviting to self. Calculations to distinguish between self other orientations with disinviting behaviors revealed that 89.3% of the respondents scored higher on disinviting to self than disinviting to others, 5.4% scored equally on disinviting to self and others, and 5.4 scored higher on disinviting to others than disinviting to self.

Limitations

The findings of this preliminary study should be interpreted with caution due to the select population used and limitations of the instrument. Different results might occur if a large, random sample of the general population was tested. The subjects in this study were all college undergraduates, a small subset of the general population. Also, the subjects were currently enrolled in courses designed for self-exploration, improving communication, and gaining understanding about human behavior. Perhaps their interests, which prompted them to take these courses, skewed the results in the direction of higher levels of inviting behavior toward others than would be found in the general population.

Another limitation is that the nature of self report instruments dictates that the instrument only reflect what individuals are willing and able to reveal about themselves. What people profess about themselves may not correspond with what they really do.

Discussion and Implications

The results from this study strongly support both original hypotheses. The data suggest that individuals tend to be far more understanding, forgiving, and supportive of others than they are of themselves. moreover, these same individuals tend to be much more repressive, punitive, and harsh toward themselves than they are toward others.

Rich (1992) suggested that "we must frequently modify both our thinking and behavior, to become more self- and other-encouraging." Given that invitational behavior is intentional and can be learned, it follows that teaching the invitational model, either through didactic instruction or through modeling, could modify thinking and behavior :n a positive direction.

We hypothesize that individuals with a positive and realistic self-concept will be more inviting to both themselves and others. Perhaps future research could explore the relationship between self-esteem and .inviting behaviors. Do people with positive self-concepts tend to be as inviting, or more inviting to themselves than to others? Conversely, do they tend to be less disinviting to themselves than to others? Answers o these and related questions; would further enrich the research-based '-knowledge of the invitational theory.

In light of research that students learn more when they see themselves as able, valuable, and responsible (Aspy, Aspy, & Roebuck, 1985), it follows that schools should encourage students to view themselves in positive ways. Perhaps in addition to the Biblical injunction, "Love thy neighbor as thyself"

(Leviticus 19:18), individuals could also be invited to "Love thyself as thy neighbor".

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