

## Editorial

### Do Invitations with Selfish Motives Smell as Sweet?

While Shakespeare claims that a rose by any other name would smell just as sweet, I have wondered quite frequently if an invitation sent when the sender is doing it, not because of the joy of being inviting, but because it is polite, are requirement imposed upon oneself, or if one really thinks the invitation will be personally beneficial. What is the role of personal emotions and motives while extending invitations? The general rule of thumb is that invitations, to be invitations, have to be sincere. Yet, sincerity does not preclude a motive that is primarily centered on self-interest. Recently, I found myself doing something nice, not earth shattering in its generosity, but certainly illustrative of an inviting act but the reasons were not quite what they ought to be.

#### *What's in It for Me?*

I was standing in line ready to order my Polish sausage with extra sauerkraut. In front of me was a mother, attractively dressed in a sari, and her infant daughter. The mother was struggling to find money in her purse and then latching onto the plastic card that is so magical in American society presented it to the clerk. Behind the counter came a polite but tired, "I'm sorry 'mam but we don't accept credit cards. Cash only." He then pointed to an ATM machine and said, "You can get cash there." The mother was embarrassed as she looked back at everyone in line. It was a long line and what that moved much too slowly. I had

been amusing by myself making faces at her baby and, in just an instant, had taken a liking to the kid. Impulsively I reached out with a ten-dollar bill, and said, "Add a Polish sausage to that, and I'll take care of both." This only added to the embarrassment of the mother so to ease her discomfort I said, "Anybody with a baby that cute shouldn't have to pay." I grinned a big smile and touched the baby on the nose. The baby grabbed my finger instantly, refusing to let go and causing everyone in line to smile acceptingly. The mother managed a grateful "Thank you" and waited patiently for me to retrieve my finger from her little girl. Feigning an inability to retrieve my finger from the mighty grip of the tiny hand I taunted, "She sure has a strong grip for someone so tiny." By this time, my Polish was ready, the mom quickly retreated, and the clerk returned my change with a smile and "That was really nice of you."

#### *A Tale Retold*

I have recounted this incident in the way an eyewitness might have seen the event. I like it that way since it makes me look like a really nice guy. As a researcher and professional skeptic, I need all the good will sent my way just to break even on most days. However, if the witness could also read my thoughts, would good will or resentment be my reward? Would it change the way the event is interpreted? Let's see.

First, remember that this line was a s-l-o-w one and I was really hungry. Quite honestly, I was not thinking of sweet thought about the clerk who was less than efficient at the task at hand. Mentally, I was also less than cordial in the way I assessed her intellectual and motivational attributes. Second, I was really annoyed at several previous customers who got to the front of the order line and THEN attempted to decide what they wanted. I once again mentally conjured up an assessment each customer's intellectual attributes and social efficacy. As you might guess, the last thing on my mind was sending invitations to the mass of humanity that surrounded me at the moment. The last straw was this lady in front of my having her order arrive and THEN attempting to locate payment. I had concluded, without exception and without doubt, that I had to be the only thinking individual nearby and that this vortex of stupidity would soon swallow me and the rest of my afternoon. That is, until I noticed the tiny infant in the grocery cart in front of me. I sent silly faces to the infant to express my irritation at the state of affairs. Attempting to derive a bit of amusement at the same time was pleasant enough but only marginally improved my immediate demeanor.

When her mother fumbled her payment, impatience took over. I politely offered to pay for her order and mine just so I could get things moving along, get my sausage, and retreat to my own little private world and consume inordinate amounts of sodium nitrate, sodium nitrite, and animal fat. If you can't say something good, don't say anything, so I decided I'd retreat to my own private universe ASAP. In the meantime, I used some polite banter with the infant to thinly cover the irritation, after all, I am

civilized to some degree, and I actually did enjoy cooing at the baby.

These introspective revelations most assuredly put a reverse spin on the first interpretation. Most would now conclude without too much debate that I was really the prototypical "jerk" whose universe only includes self-interest and self-satisfaction. Was I the jerk everyone tries to avoid? If judged on my thoughts at the moment, I would have to say, "Probably so."

### *What Motivates Inviting Behavior?*

Who am I really? Am I the jerk whose impatience spawned mental derogatory evaluations of almost everyone around him, or the nice guy who plays with little kids, alleviates group tension, and helps out a stranger in need? Can I avoid irritation and mental judgments when faced with adverse situations? Or, are my thoughts just thoughts, and what really matters is what I do in the situation? Can I have disinviting thoughts while acting invitingly? And, if so, does that mean I'm insincere, a hypocrite, and a phony? Or, does it mean that acting invitingly means controlling behavior while accepting feelings?

I've pondered those questions for several days now and have arrived at a number of answers. Primarily I have concluded that if the actions are honest and directed at the benefit of others, the actions are inviting, even if the emotions at the moment are not so inviting. Not only that, I've begun to wonder if invitations can be sent not only the help the recipient, but also help the helper.

These aren't the notions I thought would answer the question. I thought being inviting would be selfless, putting others first, filled with sacrifice and so on. There was, however, one fact that kept popping into mind: When someone is inviting, it almost always pays big benefits to the sender. I learned a long time ago, that helping others makes my worries less bothersome. Kindness I send to others almost always triggers within me a positive sense of self-worth. That positive sense of worth isn't held hostage by the silence of others. It is a judgment I have made about myself, give to myself, and that, after all, is really the point: To make accurate self judgments of acceptance of ones actions and find those judgments to be good ones.

Anyway, it is always more pleasant to be welcomed as a nice person than avoided as a parasite. Mark Twain did have a point when he said that if he was sent to heaven after his demise, it would be most assuredly for things he regretted doing. However, we still are faced with great evidence that being inviting is its own reward and not dependent upon the gratitude of others.

This, though, is only part of the issue that has been in my thoughts. The question I have more difficulty in answering is this: "When one is being helpful to others *primarily for personal benefit*, is one really being inviting?" If, as a company executive, I treat my employees as described by invitation theory so that they will be better employees and therefore more profitable to the company, am I being inviting? If I treat my students in inviting ways with the specific goal of raising achievement and earning accolades, am I really an invitational educator? If I work to create an inviting school

so *I'll* have a pleasant place to work, am I an inviting leader?

### ***Selfless or Selfish?***

I am comfortable with the view that inviting behavior is frequently beneficial to the recipient of the invitation *and* the one sending the invitation. I've not found comfort in asserting that selfish motivations can inspire inviting behavior. However, I really haven't been able to refute the argument either. It would be easy to say that any selfish invitation isn't really an invitation, but that would be primarily semantic...the actions are the same, the receiver benefits equally, and it would be impossible for anyone other than the sender to know exactly why the invitation was sent. Yet, nagging in the background of my thinking is the assumption of selflessness from the sender.

I am asking you, the reader, to help me with this dilemma. I would like to hear from you, regarding your views, arguments, evidence, and insight. Email me at [priner@unf.edu](mailto:priner@unf.edu) with JITP in the subject line. Of course, hand written responses are always welcomed and the address can be found in the author's guidelines elsewhere in this issue. In the future, I would like to share your ideas with others, perhaps in our next edition of JITP.

### **New Format, New Publication Date**

A number of changes have occurred during the past year. We are changing format to an 8.5" by 11" trim size. The new format is more economical, easier to disseminate as reprints, and provides some advantages such as sidebars to help the

reader navigate each article. We will also be moving our target publication date to September avoiding the end of year rush and facilitating a more manageable workload and, hopefully, providing some beginning-of-school-year ideas and inspiration to our many public school educators.

We will also begin using the Radford University Center as host for the publication and mailing of the journal. This will put both publications The Forum and the JTIP at the Radford Center and under the capable oversight of its directors Paula Stanley and Robert Small.

### *Some Very Special People*

Jack and Pat Schmidt have nurtured our journal since its inception and have made precious contributions to JITP's success and consistent quality. Jack served as the first editor of the JITP, breathing life into what was at the time just a dream. Pat operated Brookcliff Publications Inc. who took the fledgling journal under wing and nurtured it for many years. Jack and Pat have now retired and Brookcliff Publications retired with them. Pat, Jack, and Brookcliff have served the Alliance as far more than a publisher, but as close friends, not only formatting copy but proofing, nurturing, quizzing, prodding, and in general seeing that the journal moves from words in an electronic world to the concrete product that is distributed and archived around the world.

William Purkey sends a special note of thanks to our friends"

*Please add my voice to others in thanking you for your years of dedicated service to the Alliance. Special*

*appreciation is extended to you for your outstanding work as publisher of our Journal of Invitational Theory and Practice. Not only did you print and publish our JITP, but you fathered (and mothered it.) It was your vision that encouraged us to create a journal. To borrow a line from Shakespeare, "I can no other answer give but thanks, and thanks, and ever thanks."*

I am pleased to announce that this is the first edition employing the considerable skills of Ken Smith of Australian Catholic University. Ken will be serving as Associate Editor with the dual roles of fostering research in invitational education psychometrics and in promoting international research in invitational education and theory. The Alliance is an international effort at promoting invitational education and has published research and program development studies conducted outside of the United States for a number of years. Ken will help increase that emphasis and, hopefully, will be able to link researchers in different continents so that multinational studies can be conducted. Ken is also a wizard at advanced statistical analysis and will serve as a resource for potential authors in conducting and disseminating their work.

### *Looking at this Edition*

Our first article in this edition describes the characteristics and effects of invitations on entering middle school students. Ellen Usher and Frank Pajares identify a number of attributes, which contribute positively to academic self-efficacy.

Our second piece describes the characteristics of staff development that en-

abled a number of schools to obtain the inviting school award. Trudy Styne visited the U.S. from her homeland South Africa to study inviting schools and how they got to be that way. Voices of students, teachers, and administrators are shared in this review of inviting school development strategies.

Our third piece is an essay and literature review on the effects words have on children in school settings. Vernon Smith and Faite Mack explore the effects that words have on the development of children. Are actions and deeds, not words, really the things that count? According to their findings, words go a long way to foster or destroy self-confidence and esteem.

Our final piece is a comparative examination of two theories for supporting

student maturation and learning in school settings. As would be expected, the more accurately competing theories become, there would be an increased commonality in their explanations of behavior and the strategies for promoting healthful personal development. Roger Zeeman compares William Glasser's Choice Theory with the works of William Purkey in the development of Invitational Education.

I hope you enjoy the offerings of these very bright, articulate, and generous folk who (by the way) receive no other benefit other than providing you, the reader, with an invitation to become a more knowledgeable and inviting person.

Phil Riner  
Editor