

Editorial—

Procedural Justice and the Inviting Stance

Two years ago, I used this space to demonstrate that, despite all the problems and deficits that beleaguer us, the world has never been better. That has always been a difficult proposition for me since I am acutely aware of the pervasive injustices that infiltrate every society at all levels. Yet, when we take the empirical approach, that startling finding is supported again and again. This is good news and should provide encouragement and reinforce our determination. However, there are still many problems to conquer and in some areas we are not making the progress needed. Recently I have been developing instructional modules for pre-service teachers on programs for the prevention of child abuse and neglect, for developing pro-social attitudes and behaviors in students, and for programs that assist children in selecting modes of societal participation that are advantageous to them while rejecting the attraction of the youth street gang. In that research, I found an underbelly of society, often referred to as the American underclass, where many of the assumptions about life I take for granted are threatened if not lacking.

I rarely worry about my next meal, about the occupants of a car turning the corner while I walk down the street, about passing a store, or about wearing the wrong color clothing for the current neighborhood. Yet, this is a reality for far too many children and adults. In studying the antecedents to violence, poverty is typically the first culprit that is identified as a leading cause of this malaise. In the United States, about 50% of children under six live in poverty and about 25% of children six to 18 meet the criteria of poverty. Yet, the numbers of children who resort to violence to resolve their

problems does not approach those figures. Certainly, most children who live in poverty find alternative ways to resolve unpleasant situations. In reading hundreds of pages of student accounts of their daily lives, I have begun to suspect an even more fundamental cause of behavior that lashes out at society: a lack of procedural justice.

The theory is straightforward: If people's expectations regarding fair procedures are not met, they often will be upset, even if they agree with the end result. The basic theory of procedural justice operates quite logically in fulfilling the demands of living in a society as opposed to a solitary life: We put our personal rights "in trust" with an organization such as the school. We expect these rights to be honored and protected by fair and equitable procedures we use to operate the institution and establish relationships. In a more concrete description, parents will put their children "in trust" to the school but in return they expect the school to protect the rights of the child. As children mature during later childhood, they also become aware of this expectation of procedural justice. How many times do the parents of a teenager hear, "But that's not fair!" "Not fair" is a synonym for the problem of unfulfilled expectations established by an emerging understanding of procedural justice.

Unfulfilled expectations can be sharply reduced by carefully establishing and following a clearly defined decision-making process. There should also be a fair and clearly defined way for making, enforcing, and changing the rules that everyone can find agreement. Procedural justice allows us to connect with our students, parents, and community in ways that engender trust and credibility.

True to the perceptual tradition, whether we feel our expectations of procedural justice are being met is truly an individual determination. When those expectations are denied, anger results. In fact, I think every angry person I've met in some way feels the procedures have wronged him. Our crav-

ings for justice can be so strong that even if the offending procedures included bad weather and uncooperative fish, we can feel mistreated. The *perception* is, "I've made arrangements to go fishing. I expect the weather and the fish to fulfill their duties to make this an enjoyable outing." In this case, of course, the expectations may be out of line with what one can reasonably expect. However, to someone feeling anger, those expectations are very real and very influential. I might add, that if someone understands the nature of the conditions, has reasonable expectations, and has used this knowledge to form many differing expectations of outcomes and, perhaps, to plan alternatives, the individual may be sad, or inconvenienced, or even irritated, but not angry. If the injustice happens to be real and justified, as they so often are, anger and alienation is almost inevitable unless replaced by disengagement, subterfuge, aggression, or violence. Fortunately, we can find an antidote.

Invitational Education has as a cornerstone all of the elements of procedural justice. It accounts for perceptual differences. It places extraordinary emphasis on student and client perceptions of procedures and policies and how they are practiced (three of the five "Ps").

When procedures, policies, and practices are considered "petty and "unnecessary" and are discarded when inconvenient, the research clearly shows that administrative units, whether the classroom or workplace, dissolve into confusion, angst, and, at least for the disenfranchised, disengagement. Confusion abounds. Thus, we can safely conclude that invitational theory's emphases are well placed. An emphasis on procedures, policies, and practices are appropriate and valuable guides to principals, teachers, counselors, and parents. This edition of the JITP illustrates this concept quite well. It includes studies that examine ways of assessing student perceptions of procedures and policies; the theoretical underpinnings of the conditions of fairness; and case studies

where the use of the “5P” starfish analogy was central to the creation of enhanced learning environments.

Ken Smith and John Barnard present an elaborate project “The psychometric properties of the Invitational School Survey (ISS): An Australian Study.” In it, they example the ISS for reliability and validity. The ISS passed muster on all accounts. However, with a series of statistical analyses they were able to create a shortened version of the ISS while maintaining the positive psychometric characteristics of the much longer version. For those planning to use the ISS, this shortened version will simplify the process of assessing the inviting qualities of your school.

In “Diversity and Invitational Theory and Practice,” Jack Schmidt explores how invitational approaches can be used to expand our understanding of students and clients. He finds that invitational theory is congruent with multicultural literature and can be used to guide educational and counseling approaches with diverse populations. The article revisits the basic concepts presented by invitational theory and practice, and relates them to issues of diversity. Specifically, it examines constructs and processes espoused by invitational theory in the context of establishing helpful relationships with people from diverse cultural backgrounds.

Dan Shaw’s piece “Genuineness: An Overlooked Element of Inviting Behavior” reminds us that action without commitment is inadequate. We must mean what we say; care when we say we care; help when we say we will help; and share the futures of our clients when we assure them we will there for them in their time of need.

Donna Thompson provides the first of two case histories of how schools can undergo a transformation to become more inviting in her article “Organizational Learning in Action: Becoming an Inviting School.” Donna demonstrates how invitational education enhances organizational learning that cre-

ates an environment that is better understood and managed. Ann Kalec describes our second transformational journey with an account of her personal experiences in “Invitational Education at Cooper Elementary.” Instead of addressing school improvement on all fronts, Ann describes an incremental approach where key elements are chosen to receive priority treatment. Once inertia is overcome, success breeds success and Cooper certainly is a success story that needs to be shared. Both articles provide strategies and experiential perspectives on how inviting approaches can be realized.

In “Why Not . . . “On Purpose?” Al Milliren and Wes Wingett provide an analysis of several psychological approaches to counseling. In Adlerian humanistic theory they find the roots of invitational education and further extend its theoretical base.

As an editor, I’m particularly fond of this edition of the JITP because of its representative breadth of approaches. It is reassuring that as an organization we study invitational education from statistical, theoretical, or practical approaches. Invitational Education is truly an inclusive approach to improving the quality of life for others and ourselves.

Phil Riner