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Towards More Inclusive Schools: An Application of Hospitality in Parental Involvement

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Introduction

Evidence supporting the relationships between home, school, and academic achievement has brought parental involvement to the forefront of discussions of student success. Involving parents is one of many strategies schools use to address the persistent achievement gap between low-income, disadvantaged students and middle-class students as well as between African American and Latino and White students in the U.S. (Silver, 2004). Achievement gap is the observed difference in measured performance in groups of students, namely groups defined by low socioeconomic status and race/ethnicity. National comprehensive reform efforts such as No Child Left Behind (NCLB) and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) were undertaken to ensure equal access to education and to close any gaps in achievement between students. To

meet these goals and address the inequities, NCLB and IDEA required K-12 schools to involve parents in every aspect of their children's education.

Schools struggle with effectively and appropriately involving parents, and parents struggle with feeling valued by schools and trusting school personnel. The methods schools employ to engage diverse families often focus on policies and procedures while neglecting some of the processes and interactions that make diverse families feel welcome, embraced, and included (Aceves, 2014). Initiatives often target what parents can do for the school but fail to address the lack of psychological safety in schools. Schools tend to blame parents for problems that arise. The exclusion and isolation frequently experienced by diverse families in U.S. schools, particularly African American and Latino families, may act as barriers to optimal parental involvement in education and contribute to student issues of equity. With these kinds of struggles, it is sometimes difficult to imagine the positive outcomes of having families involved, but there are some.

Higher graduation rates, reduction in overrepresentation in special education, and academic and behavioral success in schools are some of the positive effects of collaboration between parents and schools. High levels of parental involvement continue to be associated with strong grade-level performance, advanced placements, and post-secondary school success; thus, parental involvement is particularly necessary for schools with large groups of underperforming students. Because the literature to this effect is clear, not involving families is considered unethical and unprofessional.

Families and schools may have very differing understandings of their roles in parental involvement and their conceptualization of what parental involvement should be may differ as well, making implementation of programs and initiatives difficult. A framework that can bridge these gaps in understanding while

addressing the complexities of diverse parental involvement may be found in the historical and theological concepts of Christian hospitality. The ideas about hospitality offered by Miroslav Volf (1996) and Christine Pohl (1999) present a framework for mutually respectful interactions based on love. The framework is flexible and provides for contextually specific practices. Volf observed, "Hospitality as a framework provides a bridge which connects our theology with daily life and concerns" (p. 8). In other words, Christian hospitality may provide a model for how God would have educators relate to parents in schools. The very application of such a model can provide solutions for overcoming some of the exclusion specific groups experience in schools and possibly result in increased parental involvement in schools. More importantly, it may contribute to more inclusive schools (Pohl, 1999; Volf, 1996).

Parental involvement is an ethical and professional responsibility of educators, but hospitality is an imperative for Christians (Johnson & Ridley, 2008). Applying hospitality to the requirement of parental involvement is faith in action (Pohl, 1999; Volf, 1996), a course of action that may lead to greater inclusion and increased involvement that make a difference. Because the application of hospitality is flexible and contextually specific, it empowers educators to use what works for their parents rather than a prescribed program. To this end, this article examines hospitality as a framework for addressing some of the challenges and complexities attendant upon involving parents from diverse backgrounds in their children's schools.

Theoretical Foundations

The concept of hospitality as a framework for parental involvement is based on a theory of human development and two perspectives on human interaction: Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs, Volf's (1996) idea of exclusion and embrace, and Pohl's (1999) thoughts on hospitality as a Christian tradition. The theory explains why creating safe and welcoming environments is critical for optimal engagement and the perspectives provide motivations and models for relating to others.

Maslow's Theory of Hierarchy of Needs
Maslow's hierarchy of needs is a theory about human motivation. The model is usually depicted as a hierarchy with five levels. Safety is the second-level need and includes the need for order, security, stability, and freedom from fear. The third level is love and a sense of belonging. At this level are needs for intimacy, friendship, affection, love, and family. Research suggests that the failure of engagement programs is partially due to the failure of schools to provide a sense of safety and belonging to diverse families (Delpit, 2012; Kunjufu, 2002; Thompson, 2003).

Pohl's Perspective of Hospitality
Pohl (1999) asserted that hospitality, which encompasses physical, social, and spiritual dimensions of human existence, is a central imperative of the Christian moral life. She suggested that hospitality has lost its Christian values and currently has more to do with the elite serving the elite. Although hospitality is typically extended to family, friends, and influential people, a distinctive Christian contribution to the concept is the emphasis on the poor and neediest. Pohl noted that Christians' concerns for hospitality towards needy strangers led to the establishment of hospitals, hospices, hostels, and other practical responses to need. Pohl urged the reclamation of hospitality by the Christian community as a practice both modeled and commanded by God.

Volf's Perspective of Exclusion and Embrace
Volf's (1996) work on exclusion and embrace provides a Biblical model for relating to other people. It calls for the embrace, not the eradication, of difference. It does not promote conforming, but rather an openness to becoming. Embrace, as Volf describes it, is made up of four structural elements: open arms, waiting, closing arms, and opening them again. The term open arms is a symbol of reaching for the other while creating space for him or her. Waiting invites but allows time for a response. It is not overzealous or forceful. Closing arms makes one's presence felt while receiving the other's presence. The last element of embrace is to open the arms again. According to Volf, "The other may be inscribed into the self, the alterity of the other may not be neutralized by merging both into an undifferentiated 'we'" (p. 63).

A distinctive of Volf's (1996) approach is seeing others and self as Christ sees them. This distinctive challenges contemporary views of identity and worth and concepts of distance. At the very center of the model is the concept of self-donation. Self-donation challenges individuals to go beyond co-existing and

tolerance to respecting others. The model encourages an openness to recognize and invite others in while honoring boundaries. It promotes dialogue between persons with different perspectives. Volf believed that embracing others enriches the lives of everyone. The application of embrace and concepts of inclusion may offer insight into how to best engage diverse families in an educational system that has largely ignored and berated them.

From this theory and these two perspectives come the elements of a framework for parental involvement: safe and trusting environments and embrace of differences.

Parental Involvement

Parental involvement can be defined as regular and voluntary participation. It can also be viewed in terms of the structures and cohesive efforts of schools to engage parents (Dettmer, Knackendoffel, & Thurston, 2012). To what extent either occurs and the burden of initiation is heavily debatable (Epstein, 2001; Pushor, 2007). Schools must consider family backgrounds and experiences when individualizing involvement efforts and creating programs (Kunjufu, 2012). A family's socioeconomic status, school experiences, education, culture, and race vastly affect their construction and understanding of parental involvement and, therefore, their practices (Jeynes, 2005; Thompson, 2003). Conversely, educators' experiences, training, support, race, and class affect their perceptions of parent involvement and families, influencing the implementation of family engagement activities and outreach (Dettmer et al., 2012; Kunjufu, 2002). At times these differences in understanding leave educators, school leaders, families, and policy makers at a loss (Epstein, 2001).

Different Forms of Involvement

Families and schools often have distinctly different ideas about what it means to be involved. Schools endorse a hierarchy of involvement that is preferred that neglects to value the contributions of some diverse parents (Diamond, Wang, & Gomez, 2006; Williams, 2007). Latino families, for example, may use a concept called consejo, or encouragement, as a form of involvement, but schools may not value this method of engagement as much as other, more demonstrative types (Alfaro, O'Reilly-Diaz, & Lopez, 2014; Epstein, 2001). Similarly, African American parents often prefer to intervene directly with schools when there is an issue that involves their children (Diamond et al., 2006).

Take for example, the case of Mary, who is failing math. Mary's parents call for a meeting with her teacher and request that a plan be made to address the issue. Mary's parents require her to attend after-school interventions and request that her teacher differentiate instruction. They purchase a grade-level math book to help Mary at home. For Mary's parents this is meaningful involvement; however, the school may perceived it to be interference. Mary's parents value partnering with schools to construct solutions (Jeynes, 2005) whereas schools tend to place a higher value on parents helping with homework, attending meetings, and responding when there is a problem.

Disconnection

These perceptual and conceptual differences have made implementation of effective family engagement policies and practices challenging and especially frustrating for families of students who have the greatest aspirations for their children to achieve academically (Delpit, 2012; Jeynes, 2005). Notwithstanding personal motivators, time, and energy, diverse families have not always responded favorably to traditional involvement practices such as parent-teacher association meetings, volunteering, and parent leadership (Thompson, 2003; Williams, 2007). Even when diverse families participate in traditional ways, they don't always feel welcomed, valued, or embraced; they feel tolerated (Sue & Sue, 2007; Williams, 2007). The literature suggests diverse families may feel disconnected from school culture despite the fact that they place high value on education and are involved in many ways (Carter, 2003; Delpit, 2012). The disconnection makes communication very difficult and miscommunication very common, often leading to deepening feelings of distrust and isolation (Nzinga-Johnson, Baker, & Aupperlee, 2009). As a consequence, some diverse parents avoid interactions with schools and school staff altogether (Baker, 2001; Epstein, 2001).

So despite the benefits of family engagement, educators are not very effective in engaging diverse families (Auerbach, 2012; Thompson, 2003). The relationship between perceptions of involvement, teacher practices, and parents' level of trust and sense of inclusion are not clear. Over many years, however, diverse families have communicated high levels of stress, discomfort, and feelings of being judged when interacting with schools, making obtaining their involvement complex

(Harry & Klinger, 2005; Dettmer et al., 2012; Thompson, 2003). Discussions about the achievement gap and the inferred links between achievement, parenting, and family engagement have often led to conversations that blame students and families for lower student performance.

Importance of Trust and Safety

Judgmental attitudes do not promote parental involvement. Rather, hospitality, which creates an environment of safety and trust, invites parental participation. Scholars concerned with the achievement of diverse students have advocated that space be provided in which diverse families are able to share, make decisions, affect change, and learn without fear and judgment (Dettmer et al., 2012; Palmer, 2007; Pushor, 2007). For many diverse parents, these spaces have historically been found in faith-based organizations, race-based and culture-based organizations, and community centers. But policy makers and school leaders need to know how to bring some of these spaces to schools (Fagan, 1996; Green-Powell, Hilton, & Joseph, 2011). To achieve this, educators must address the complexities and challenges of diverse parental involvement with solutions that are flexible.

The literature suggests trust or lack thereof is a major factor in the family involvement of diverse families (Auerbach, 2012; Dettmer et al., 2012; Machen, Wilson, & Notar, 2005; Thompson, 2003; Williams, 2007). Lack of trust thwarts motivation and the sense of safety necessary for optimal human functioning (Maslow, 1943; Strier & Katz, 2015). So as an alternative to schools, some African American families have identified churches and race- and culture-based organizations as conduits of support as they engage with education (Green-Powell et al., 2011; Removed for blind review). These organizations have been more effective in engaging some diverse families in general because they have a history of providing empowerment and advocacy while embracing and including the families (Childs, 2009). If schools are able to glean from the principles used by these organizations, they may be able to support more diverse parents at optimal levels of involvement (Auerbach, 2012; Thompson, 2003).

Trust cannot exist without a sense of safety. Although every school is required to develop a safety plan for students, personnel, and volunteers, this plan is often limited to physical safety and ignores the psychologi-

cal safety of the students and their families. So whereas schools do well to address some physical needs, they neglect to address the psychological and developmental needs of diverse families (Carter, 2003; Delpit, 2012; Thompson, 2003). More attention is given to policy, procedure, and student outcomes and little concern is shown for the spirit of the policy, the effects of the procedures on involvement, and personal interactions. According to Chittister (1990) hospitality was a survival mechanism used in ancient Middle East by boaters and people living in deserts. They tended to the needs of others knowing one day they may be in need. "They also welcomed the psychological nourishment of company" (Chittister, 1990, p. 124).
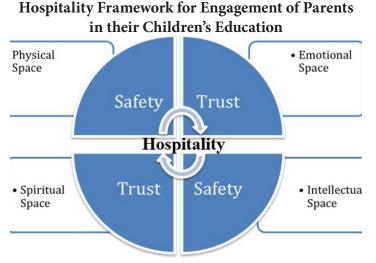
Given the history of racially disproportionate suspensions and expulsions and over-representation in special education, more work needs to be done with African American and Latino families to build trust. Diverse families attempting to engage with schools are often met with indifference (Carter, 2003). Good and Brophy (2003) found that race negatively impacted interactions between teachers and students. Teachers may feel a sense of hostility or rejection towards students from diverse backgrounds (Delpit, 2012; Good & Brophy, 2003). If teachers feel this way about students from diverse backgrounds, the students' families quite likely sense this and their feelings of distrust deepen (Maslow, 1943).

Carter (2003) asserted that schools, replicating larger society, have a preference for dominant forms of cultural capital that are based on White, middle-class values. Dominant capital is expressed via interactions with staff and other parents. It includes ways of being, use of language, and traditional types of parental involvement. In their preference for these forms of cultural capital, schools regularly devalue the non-dominant forms of capital diverse parents bring to schools (Carter; Zeynep, 2012). This preference may result in mistrust, further isolating groups that are still struggling to be fully embraced by schools and society (Carter, 2003). If this happens repeatedly, parents may opt out of important types of involvement, often to the detriment of their children (Epstein, 2001). However, Christian hospitality offers a means of overcoming issues of lack of trust and safety.

Hospitality: A Framework for Parental Involvement

One way to look at trust and safety concerns is to consider the spaces in schools. Teaching and learning, in fact most human interaction, take place in four types of space: physical, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual. Schools interact with parents in these spaces. Christian hospitality gives attention to ensuring that each space is safe by embracing any differences expressed within them. Safety and embrace build trust, and as trust grows safety grows even stronger. This is hospitality: creating an environment of safety and trust in which parents can become engaged in ways that are comfortable for them because they feel valued.

Figure 1

Hospitality Framework for Engagement of Parents in their Children's Education

Hospitality, as illustrated above (Figure 1), is not a program with defined steps or techniques for engaging parents. Rather, it is a framework drawing attention to areas in which school personnel can examine differences with parents in values, perceptions, and practices and work to understand, accept, and embrace the perspectives of parents. As a framework, hospitality is a flexible approach to inclusion, encouraging schools to identify the preferences and perspectives of their parents and construct solutions tailored specifically to them.

Critically acclaimed educational leader Parker Palmer (2007) offered practical suggestions for schools desiring to become more hospitable. His work on hospitality in schools is usually considered in the context of teachers and students; however the practices he suggests are applicable to the larger context of schools, including family engagement initiatives (Burwell &

Huyser, 2013). Palmer challenged schools to give attention to physical, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual space and the interactions within those spaces.

Physical Space
The physical space in schools should promote openness and be confidential and comfortable (Palmer, 2007). Those who are invited into the physical space are included in the activities conducted in that space, and official roles are not conditions of participation. These traits are attributes of a safe environment (Maslow, 1943). Parents should be allowed to participate in ways that are meaningful them or simply observe until they feel safe enough to do more.

Unfortunately, the physical space in schools is not always welcoming. Signs that read "Parent, please drop your child off" or "Parents are not allowed to eat in the cafeteria with their children" may be perceived as unwelcoming. Although ignored by some, they may be perceived more negatively by diverse families; diverse families may view such communications as micro-aggressions partly because for many diverse families, eating together is very important. It is a part of some family's cultural identity. In some cultures, food helps maintain a sense of family and togetherness (Janer, 2008). The signage devalues the importance of eating together for these groups and, although it may be a legal requirement to post the sign, alternative places to eat as a family could be provided. Schools cannot know the importance or the negative impact of such practices unless they seek out, invite, and build relationships with parents.

Spiritual Space
Addressing physical space only is not enough to create a safe and trusting environment. Spiritual space is also important, the space in which people consider what is meaningful to them. Hospitality in regard to spiritual space avoids giving advice. Instead it listens, paraphrases, and allows reflection. Too often schools bombarded families with information without allowing family members the opportunity to process the information or ask questions. Hospitable spiritual space allows time for stories to be shared; this may require a restructuring of business as usual to permit more relationship building, open communication, and ongoing input from those who have no position, power, or assigned groups. Hearing the stories of families may better inform educators about the ways parents are

already involved or would like to be involved in their children's education as well as what may be hindering their participation.

Emotional Space

Hospitality also gives care to emotional space. It does not obligate parents to defend or apologize for their feelings. Rather, hospitable schools encourage parents to express their feelings in a constructive manner or simply give them space to share. A safe environment must be created in which parents can express how they feel without fear of isolation or retaliation. Some conversations or situations may elicit strong emotions, and educators can listen, ask good questions, avoid judgment, and offer words of comfort. It is important that opportunities to share are made available in the widest forms. If parents do not show up to events or programs to give feedback, educators can think of other ways to encourage sharing. How can technology be used for parents to express their feelings? Are there anonymous opportunities for feedback on curriculum, parental involvement programs, discipline, and school spending patterns? These opportunities can be options.

During face-to-face and virtual interactions, it may help to co-create ground rules so no one person monopolizes the conversations. Care can be taken to seek the input of parents before setting agendas. When agendas are set, they must be flexible to hear parents and give opportunities for their concerns, issues, and comments to be addressed. Suggestion boxes, surveys, open-ended questions, and periodic check-ins from educators can demonstrate interest in how parents feel. Respect and independence are essential components of emotional space. Some of what is shared may be painful to hear, and educators should be clear that the goal of hospitable involvement is inclusion and, ultimately, student success. Schools must take care to respond respectively and ask questions.

Intellectual Space

The intellectual space in schools should balance group and individual needs by creating, promoting, and reinforcing boundaries and independence (Palmer, 2007; Volf, 1996). Boundaries and confidentiality also promote trust, and listening and respect are critical components of intellectual space. According to Palmer, hospitable schools are respectful of the ideas and feelings of all. Schools have personnel and parents with varying levels of education and status, and the differ-

ences may be intimidating for some parents. A culture of respect for diverse perspectives and diverse ways of speaking and interacting can be created so parents are not intimidated. Respect for diversity is modeled in the way educators respond to and interact with parents. Care can be taken to demonstrate diverse forms of involvement while reciprocal learning expands what parents can do and how schools can honor them. There is room for debate, but in the form of respectful disagreement. Ground rules can be established for espousing respectful interactions. Listening to parents is critical. Listening to what they are saying and what they are not saying. Silence should not be viewed as lack of participation, but as learning.

Implementing Hospitality

How can teachers and administrators make schools hospitable? According to Volf (1996), offering open arms would be a good start. Offering open arms means groups and individuals reach out to live in relationship or community with vulnerable populations in schools (Pohl, 1999). Teachers, school leaders, and established groups purposefully learn how to invite and value vulnerable and diverse populations in schools. Vulnerable populations include anyone who is part of a historically marginalized historically group or is currently marginalized socially, academically, or economically.

The stratification of persons by class, income, or race is a strong determinant of how individuals interact with others, how goods are distributed, and how resources are accessed (Carter, 2003; Ladson-Billings, 2006; Delpit, 2012). It is something schools need to address, both within the classroom and in the larger school context. Attention can be given to who is accessing which services and who is not taking advantage of any. Schools can ask what steps may be taken to ensure that diverse parents provide input into what services are offered and how they are accessed and evaluated.

Build Trust

Parents will offer their input only in an atmosphere of trust. Hospitality can establish trusting relationships and moral bonds. It provides a context for recognizing diverse families' worth and, by "resisting dominant power," understanding the need for their contributions (Sutherland, 2006, p. 64). The dominant powers are those that control the resources and use their power or position to institutionalize rules and belief systems

that reinforce that power (Sutherland). Schooling in the U.S. continues to be based on White culture and language because Whites are the dominant group (Delpit, 2012). In 2011, 83% of U.S. K-12 teachers were White (Feistritzer, 2011). According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2015), in 2012, 51% of public school elementary and secondary students were White, 16% were Black, and 24% were Latino. Anderson and Taylor (2008) asserted, "The law is created by elites to protect the interest of the dominant class" (p. 177). The assertion is true in schools as well as throughout society.

According to Pohl (1999), when a socially acceptable person or group seen as having worth receives an undervalued person or group, small transformations occur. There are power differentials in schools; school personnel essentially have more power and are often seen as having more worth than students and families. Educators can offset the imbalance of power by welcoming parents into the school and classroom (giving attention to physical space), inviting them to share their children's strengths and their concerns (emotional space), asking them to share their values and priorities for their children (spiritual space), and encouraging them to co-construct parental involvement policies, practices, and programs (intellectual space). This level of open arms changes the person received and challenges schools to reassess their values and practices (Pohl, 1999).

According to Volf (1996), once the invitation is extended, true hospitality does not use coercion to force the invited; the host waits. Some types of hospitality are pushy. These types value benefit and reciprocity over service (Pohl, 1999). Pohl asserted that such hospitality gives "too little responsibility and too much reciprocity" (p. 9). This is commonly referred to as hospitality with ambition; it invites those with social, political, and spiritual status while seeking reciprocal obligations. It has an agenda. In healthy hospitality, invitations to get involved do not have an end goal such as fundraising, improvements in student behavior, or academic achievement.

If or when parents do not respond favorably to invitations, apathy should not be assumed. Rather, questions should be asked about relevance, accessibility, and need. Volf (1996) would call the failure to explore reasons for the lack of response a closing of arms without

opening them again. This type of action can result in oppression and violence (Volf, 1996). The hospitality needed to build trust between diverse families and schools is not concerned with gaining advantage nor preoccupied with benefit or reciprocity. It is focused on embrace and inclusion as a demonstration of love (Pohl, 1999; Sutherland, 2006; Volf, 1996)—love that assumes the image of God is in everyone and everyone is needed to fully embody God's image.

Overcome Exclusion of Diverse Families
Volf (1996) defined exclusion as "barbarity within civilization, evil among the good, crime against the other right within the walls of the self" (p. 60). Historically, African American and Latino families in the United States have often been viewed as inferior and not worthy of being well educated. They were largely excluded from formal education until after the Civil War. Although churches were not without physical threat from their neighbors, they created space for dialogue, questions, expressions of care, and disagreement. Diverse families, including students with disabilities, were invited into such spaces for a variety of reasons: spiritual, political, and educational (Green-Powell et al., 2011).

After the Civil War, protecting or enforcing segregation in schools eventually became illegal. After 1954, students of color gained legal access to more public educational facilities. However, stories such as that of Ruby Bridges illustrate that legislation has been insufficient to ensure the inclusion of students of color in schools. With racial integration came an increase in the identification of children of color as disabled. After 1954 a trend developed in which African American students were disproportionately identified as mentally retarded and placed in separate settings for behavior issues (Boone & King-Berry, 2007).

African American and Latino students continue to be over-represented in special education programs (Boone & King-Berry, 2007). A lack of parental involvement in the pre-referral process and in schools in general has been identified as a contributing factor (Auerbach, 2012; Boone & King-Berry). Students of color receiving special education under IDEA have the lowest graduation rate and lowest postgraduation employment, are placed in the most restrictive settings, and are underrepresented in advanced and gifted programs (Boone & King-Berry; National Center for Education Statis-

tics, 2010; Williams, 2007). The literature suggests this is due in part to differential treatment based on race and differential family and student responses to educational practices (American Psychological Association Presidential Task Force on Educational Disparities, 2012; Delpit, 2012). These variables left unchecked perpetuate a mutual sense of distrust between diverse families and schools.

However, they can be checked through the practice of hospitality. "Hospitality requires a conscious effort to be your brother's keeper" (Sutherland, 2006, p. 6). Educators must ask themselves: Do I see African American and Latino parents as my brothers and sisters? Educators can learn from parents what parents need to help their children thrive in schools. They may need for Back to School Night to be expanded to allow for more parent-to-parent or parent-to-teacher communication, or for parent-teacher conferences to be restructured to allow for reciprocal learning and bi-directional communication, or for explicit efforts to be made to train educators to work with diverse students and their families. The knowledge surrounding parental involvement and student success must be co-constructed in a safe environment where parents' ideas and values are embraced and included in the culture of the school.

When diverse families experience safety and a sense of belonging their social and cultural capital may benefit schools, communities, and society (Carter, 2003; Removed for blind review, 2015; Palmer, 2007). Maslow (1943) believed safety and belonging lead to a realization of individual or group potential and self-sufficiency. Volf (1996) called this interplay a closing of arms. It is a process of free and mutual giving and receiving. The reciprocal learning that comes from giving and receiving or home and school partnerships benefits students, parents, and educators by creating solutions not possible individually.

Hospitality potentially nourishes both giver and recipient (Pohl, 1999). Although hospitality does not discourage correct judgment and boundaries, it does not insist on its own forms of judgment (Pohl). Educators must recognize the imbalance of power in schools and act responsibly and purposefully to balance power. Care must to be taken to avoid valuing dominant forms of capital and traditional demonstrations of involvement over other forms. According to Volf (1996), hospitality calls for unconditional love and judgment

without condemnation. It seeks to protect groups and vulnerable individuals equally in both practice and policy.

Learn to Embrace

Hospitality requires not only inclusion, but also embrace. Volf (1996) warned, "Inclusion is the undiluted medicine for exclusion but may be making the patient sick with a new form of the very illness it seeks to cure" (p. 61). The reason for the caution is that inclusion is not effective without embrace. Schools tend to ignore the need for embrace and utilize the idea of hospitality in ways that reinforce hierarchies (Auerbach, 2012).

Volf asserted that embrace is a metonymy of the interplay between self and others. Embrace recognizes value in others and views everyone as equally important. Literature suggests that many diverse families, including families of students with disabilities, have been treated as peripheral to their children's education or as a barrier to overcome (Kalyanpur & Harry, 2012; Pushor, 2007; Williams, 2007). Embrace, on the other hand, invites others with open arms and, once the invitation is accepted, closes arms around them and opens them again to allow the others to be distinctive human beings (Volf, 1996). Establishing this process in schools could facilitate the sense of belonging and safety diverse families need to be full partners in education (Maslow, 1943).

Without embrace, exclusion sometimes occurs quietly, through ignoring or not having much-needed dialogue. With embrace, inclusive behaviors include genuine listening, seeking to understand the perspectives of others, being open to change, examining one's own beliefs and traditions, and learning about the beliefs and traditions of others through the lens of one's own traditions (Sutherland, 2006; Volf, 1996).

In order for hospitality to work, it must include forgiveness and love. Hospitality cannot be a marketing ploy to make parents feel heard without any real change, discourse, or cultural reciprocity. Families will see right through any manipulation and feel more distrustful and unsafe. Hospitality is messy and painful and offers no simple steps to follow. Rather, it acts as a flexible framework for involving diverse parents because educators want them involved and recognize their value and contributions to the students and to the

school.

Conclusion

Christian hospitality can be an effective means of addressing issues of power, giving power to those adversely affected by prevailing social and economic arrangements (Pohl, 1999). Christian hospitality offers solutions that are timeless and appropriate for this and any day and age. Many diverse families are negatively impacted by current social, educational, and economic arrangement. Parents do not often share power in diverse schools, even when they are in the majority (Auerbach, 2012; Delpit, 2012; Zeynep, 2012). Educators are in a position to change this reality, one family at a time, by providing hospitable involvement, paying attention to the physical, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual spaces in schools.

Contemporary theologians encourage the extending of hospitality to anyone who may need it. Diverse families need it and diverse students may suffer without it. Scholars invested in the achievement of all students believe every student and every family deserves hospitality. They know the elements of hospitality make for more effective parental involvement programs, which in turn result in better schools and improved student outcomes (Dettmer et al., 2012; Kunjufu, 2012; Palmer, 2007). Hospitality is not a set of specific actions, but rather a framework for thinking and behaving responsively to meet the needs of parents and students.

"Knowing of any sort is relational, animated by a deeper desire to come into deeper community with what we know" (Palmer, 2007, p. 54). Hospitality starts with relationship. It considers what parents may need but pauses to come into relationship with them to confirm what those physical, emotional, spiritual, and intellectual needs may actually be. Schools should realize they need parents as much as parents need educators and the school. Hospitality drives schools to reevaluate who they believe to be deserving or undeserving of a great education and involvement efforts and ensure that those in decision-making positions share the belief that all families are valuable (Pohl, 1999; Volf, 1996). When decision makers do not believe that all parents are worth the effort required to genuinely include and embrace them, their attitude impacts involvement efforts in the areas of funding, programs, outreach, and evaluation or lack thereof.

Because hospitality is countercultural, offering it carries risk of opposition and produces growing pains. Offering hospitality may result in changes in the power structure and the values of the institution, not all of which would be welcome because they may threaten current power. But working at hospitality could very well lead to more inclusive schools (Henderson, 2007). Educators need courage to learn to use hospitality in schools with the parents of their students. The potential benefits are well worth the risks.

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