"They Wanted to Study Us; They Didn't Want to Help Us": Socially Just and Participatory Research Methodologies for Demographically Changing Schools

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Abstract

Educators and leaders across Canada must re-conceptualize their pedagogies and leadership approaches and reflect on their own worldviews to enhance the transitions of new immigrant, international and refugee students into their schools. This paper reports on ongoing case study research in New Brunswick, Canada. The researchers are investigating the impact and implications of immigration and demographic changes on school and community stakeholders. The authors discuss the social justice and participatory methodological framework they are employing in the first school of five in their investigation and report the mid-case thematic findings related to the changing demographic conditions in the province. The findings have been consistently shared with school leaders and teachers through active participation, open communication and co-construction of meanings. The authors are hopeful that the key findings from this research will inform educators and policy-makers as they respond to the educational and social needs of their students and community members.

Introduction

Like many provinces across Canada, New Brunswick is becoming increasingly diverse as families from many countries around the world move into this region. Many schools and communities are reflecting these demographic changes as their school populations, once predominately populated with English, French, Wolastoqey and Mi'kmaq First Nations students, are steadily becoming more international, multilingual, multi-religious, multicultural and ethnically diverse. Building on the work of Canadian researchers (Bernhard, 2010; Hamm, 2009; Goddard & Hart, 2007; Pollock, 2012; Ryan, 1999), in regions where rapid demographic changes have affected community composition, school compliment, and the pedagogy and professional development of educators, this project officially began in April, 2015. In this paper, we report on data collected and analyzed in the first school of five in our collective case study.

Our early findings suggest that New Brunswick educators are not prepared effectively for what is already here and what is on the horizon in many more schools and communities; that is, increasingly complex diverse communities and classrooms. The vignette below was entered as a field note in a doctoral study in Alberta (Hamm, 2009). The researcher (who is a co-writer on this project) did not know at the time that the educational leader's words would echo within him long after he completed that study and moved his research program to a university in New Brunswick.

> *"It was during a short drive back to his building that the principal mentioned another study that was conducted in his school a few years before. The principal enlightened me further about the study and stated rather bluntly that one of his teachers summed up that research effort and summary in a negative tone saying,* ***"They (the researchers) wanted to study us; they didn't want to help us"*** *(Hamm, 2008, Field notes, p. 5). This comment, a day before I was going to begin my case study data collection, both concerned and intrigued me. It caused me to reflect as to why I wanted to conduct research in this particular school in the school district and community I was part of. A question soon began to plague me. How could I gain the support of teachers and administrators in this school if some of those potential participants were already disillusioned with the previous educational research conducted in their school – research that at least one teacher felt did not help the school or the teachers in it?" (Hamm, 2009, pp. 90-91).*

The principal's words now guide our team's socially just research agenda. It is not our intention to simply study "folks" and burden them with an invasive presence in their classrooms and schools, nor do we wish to leave our research sites early without fully understanding the social realities in their schools and how it affects their teaching and leadership processes. Our research vision is to be part of the positive change process that helps participants adjust their pedagogies to work effectively within their multiple educator and leadership roles in diverse schools and communities.

We frame our research in critical social justice and transformative educational theory (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2012; Shields, 2013; Theoharis, 2007) and follow constructivist philosophy to guide us in our research praxis (Lather, 1986a, 1986b). Carspecken (1996) suggests that there is a bond between critical, social justice and participatory action researchers; it is that they "find contemporary society to be unfair, unequal and both subtly and overtly oppressive for many people," and they "want to change it" (Carspecken, 1996, p. 7). We have learned though our project that we must take the time to build and sustain trusting relationships with the participants who share their stories with us. Our research takes place on the ground level of schooling where deep dialogical conversations may occur naturally and great change in lives may be realized (Freire, 1970). In our minds, our project exists to support socially just pedagogies for change in a time of unprecedented social and economic turbulence in our province and country.

Conceptual Framework

When we consider what community-engaged social justice scholarship is, we conceptualize a reciprocal, trust-building approach (Lather, 1986a). This is necessary as we exist in an expanding technological world where most Canadian students live a substantial part of their lives online. We believe that it is important for students to understand that their worldviews may not be universally accepted as they come into contact with students from around the world – both in

person and online. Recent North American political campaigns focused their election debates and social network dialogues on diversity issues related to international and national immigration (Soupcoff, 2015), the niqab and Canadian citizenship (Fine, 2015; Selick, 2015) and the international refugee crisis (Guterres, 2015). Following Parker Palmer's (2007) strength-based educational approaches, we believe that Canadian educators have great opportunities to engage with and learn more about diversity and intercultural education in its multiple forms and manifestations and thus bring their new understandings into their classrooms for their students to engage. This is crucial today as Shields (2013) reports:

> I am convinced that in this complex and volatile world, it is critically important to help our students to make sense of the myriad of information that bombards their senses on a daily basis. Teachers must be able to think differently about information and communication and recognize that the world of our students, with Tweets, Facebook, cloud computing, iPads, iPhones, and iPods, is one of constant factoids, entertainment, images, and text. (p. 7)

We are seeing first hand through our research protocols that diversity, intercultural and social justice education must become the norm in Canadian schools and not simply an additive element to fill in content and time in classroom instruction (Banks, 2004). It is not within the scope of this paper to describe the many ways teachers and educational leaders may ensure diversity, intercultural and peace education happens in their schools**.** However, we have found a wide and growing body of literature that educators can draw from to inform and support them in their educational planning to "build progressive, affirming and diverse educational communities" (Cooper, 2009, p. 720). Our community engaged social justice praxis provides us the opportunity, as educators and researchers, to learn from and with participants through several co-constructivist stages of research, on how they are responding and adjusting to demographic change in their school, community and province. We argue that the first step is for educators to come to know themselves and their own values and biases and begin the process of identifying and understanding the obstacles that impede student learning. As Palmer (2007) illustrates, "Knowing my students and subject depends heavily on self-knowledge. When I do not know myself, I cannot know who my students are. I will see them through a glass darkly, in the shadows of my own unexamined life – and when I cannot see them clearly, I cannot teach them well" (p. 3). This paper highlights preliminary findings from the first school in our study. We review the methodology and report the mid-case themes and sub-themes that are emerging from this community-based, participatory research project.

Methodological Framework

Our collective case study (Creswell, 1998; Stake, 1995) adheres closely to the constructivist epistemology and takes each school we will engage in our project as a single case. Ontologically, by exploring participant stories through initial and ongoing follow-up contact and member-checking (Stake, 1995), we aim to get to the heart of the "multiple perspectives" (Creswell, 1998, p. 75) that exist in a high school community. We perform our work with an understanding that the students, educators and administrators who volunteer to share their stories are influenced by their personal values, traditions and contextualized understandings of the social spaces they occupy within the school as a socially constructed organization. Following Hamm's assumptions (2009) in his case study research in Alberta, we use a constructivist paradigm that "assumes a

relativist ontology (there are multiple realities), a subjectivist epistemology (knower and respondent co-create understandings), and a naturalistic (in the natural world) set of methodological procedures" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. 21). We have planned to continually engage educators, administrators and students during each iteration of this project.

Prior to entering the first school, team members informed key administrators and district leaders what we wanted to investigate in the school (participant perceptions of demographic change and immigration), why we believed it was important to study this phenomenon in their school, and how we proposed to set up and structure our research and ethics protocols. It was our hope to build relationships early on with face-to-face visits and online follow-up with prospective participants.

Methodology

Organizations as human social constructs

A key philosophical position in our research is that social interactions shape schools and the cultures that develop within the physical school structure and wider community catchment areas. As Greenfield began arguing in the early 1970's, "social reality may be construed as images in the mind of man having no necessary or inevitable forms except as man creates them and endows them with reality and authority…organizations are cultural artefacts which man shapes within the limits given only by his perception and the boundaries of his life as a human animal" (Greenfield & Ribbins, 1993, pp. 5-6). Accepting Greenfield's proposition, we believe educators and leaders possess the necessary agency for social and pedagogical change that will support marginalized children and families in their schools and communities.

Qualitative research is subjective and we acknowledge that we are subjectivist interpretive researchers working within an ethnographic interpretive paradigm (Bush, 2003; Carspecken, 1996; Crotty, 2003; Rossman & Rallis, 2003). "Subjective theorists point to the different values and aspirations of individual teachers, support staff and pupils. They all experience the institution from different standpoints and interpret events and situations according to their own backgrounds and motivations" (Bush, 2003, p. 115). The researcher affirms our methodological approach:

> Subjective models relate to a mode of research which is predominantly interpretive or qualitative. This approach to enquiry is based on the subjective experience of individuals. The main aim is to seek understanding of the ways in which individuals create, modify and interpret the social world which they inhabit. It is concerned with meanings more than facts and this is the major difference between qualitative and quantitative research. (pp. 121-122).

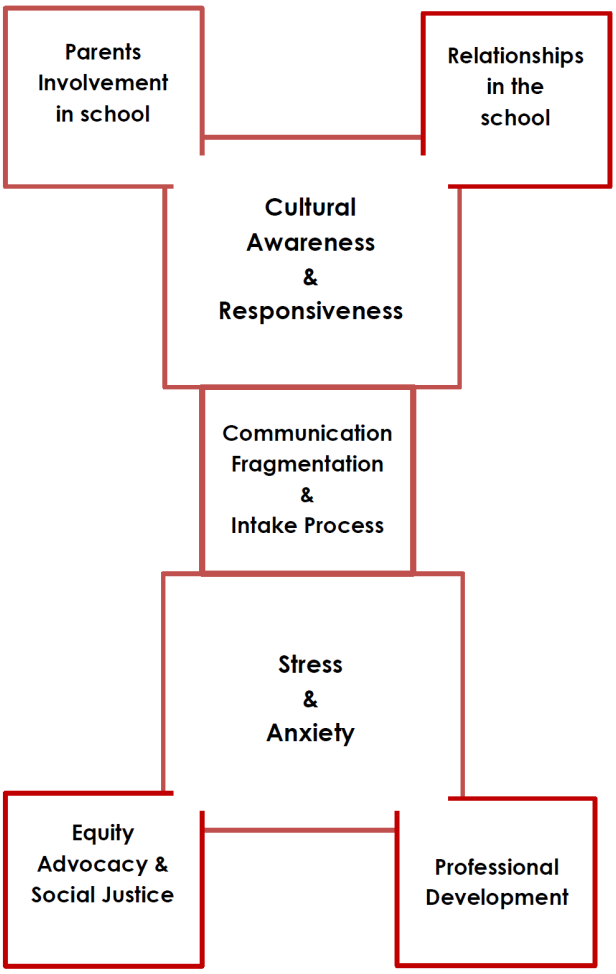
The approach we used to analyze the data in this study is continuous and emergent (Merriam, 1988). We used a recursive and constant comparative analytical process (Charmaz, 2000; Hancock & Algozzine, 2006) to code, categorize and begin to identify emerging themes in the survey data. "The constant comparative analysis method is an iterative and inductive process of reducing the data through constant recoding" (Glaser & Strauss, 1967 as cited in Fram, 2013, p. 3). This methodological step is especially important for us when we merge the themes from the varying data sets. For instance, once we begin the fourth stage of data collection, we will constantly compare the data and themes from the interviews across the data gathered in the first

two stages of our inquiry. The initial emerging themes were formed from aggregating text segments into categories and then into emerging themes. Rossman and Rallis (2003) name these "chunks"; we call them data frequency events and they may include words, short phrases, utterances, sentences and even full paragraphs.

The research team provided a 20 minute PowerPoint presentation and distributed 87 surveys to the educators and administrators. We received 13 surveys back. From the surveys, interview questions were generated and reviewed through our Research Ethics Board. The questions were then used in focus groups (N=2) and in the interviews (N = 22). At this stage, 10 of the interviews have been transcribed, member-checked and analyzed to be included in this paper. From all three data sets, we have generated eight dominant themes and four emerging themes from a total of 559 data events. The themes that we discuss in this paper are outlined in Diagram 1 (the conceptual mapping to show how the themes intersect).

Findings

Diagram 1 – Mid-case themes and emerging themes in School 1



Data Collection and Analysis

The data from the surveys and focus group interviews have been analyzed together following Stake's (1995) description of the categorical aggregation strategy for case study research. In qualitative research, a process called "member-checking" captures the participatory and co-constructivist nature of our collective case study. Carspecken (1996) says member-checking is an important process for "sharing your notes with the people you are studying to see whether or not they agree with your record" (p. 89). Therefore, before we entered the transcripts into the data arrangements for analysis, all focus and interview participants were invited and encouraged to read them over and sit down with the researchers to discuss the accuracy and some initial interpretations.

Finally, our field notes allow us to constantly reflect on our findings and question ourselves, our assumptions and biases. We consistently challenge each other's observations and understandings of the data events. Geertz (1973) reminds researchers that the "essential task of theory building here is not to codify abstract regularities but to make thick description possible, not to generalize across cases but to generalize within them" (p. 26). The following section will introduce the themes that have emerged from our mid-case data analysis.

Discussion

Theme 1: Newcomer and refugee parent involvement in the school

Many participants in the study indicated that working with newcomer parents can be challenging on multiple levels. The situation becomes more complex for them when parents are less involved in their child's school life and do not speak English well. Many participants described how parents make increasing demands on them and additionally on their children to do well in school. The educators realize more success when they intentionally reach out to parents to inform, invite and include them in the school community. One participant said that due to working commitments in the long-haul trucking – secondary and tertiary industries in New Brunswick – oftentimes, only one parent or guardian is at home, making it difficult for them to come to the school and be part of the learning community in support of their child. Further, several participants reported that many newcomer parents are not confident in their own English language skills and thus avoid coming to the school or responding to phone calls.

By intentionally reaching out to them and going into their communities or to the multicultural settlement agencies in the community, educators perceived parents felt more comfortable meeting with school officials. One focus group participant said, "I think that really helped us a long way because now parents knew we were coming to them and then the translators came to our school upon request and ever since that point we've been publishing our documents in multiple languages" (Focus Group 1, Participant 1). By being proactive, educators may continue to realize more success in engaging and involving all their parents, especially the new Syrian parents who recently arrived in the province.

The research literature widely documents similar engagement strategies in demographically changing communities and schools (Bernhard, 2010; Sobel & Kugler, 2007).

> *I think if school is the way forward, I mean if we know that this is going to improve people's lives, and if we are going to be a community school then I think we should be pulling more and more parents, particularly immigrant parents into our community. (Teacher Participant 4)*

Theme 2: Relationships in the school

Several participants reported and described how students from the immigrant and dominant cultures in the school are not engaging each other enough. Though many students meet in classes together, many are not forming stronger friendships across cultural boundaries and several teachers described how immigrant students are seeking opportunities to engage with students from the dominant culture. There is an abundance of research findings across North America and Europe that document the tense relationships that often exist between new immigrant students and their peers who largely represent the dominant majority culture and language group in diverse and rapidly changing schools (Gunderson, 2000; Kelly, 1998; Shujah, 2011; Walker & Dimmock, 2005). Generally, the educator participants perceive few problems occurring in the school between students in the school. However, participants did mention that there have been some challenges that required immediate attention. This may be understandable in any large school, particularly in a school experiencing ongoing demographic changes. One anonymous survey participant said that new immigrant students were better at forming "intercultural communication skills to a much greater degree than our majority group at the school… This kinship is often something that I had hoped I would see more of across other groups of students" (Survey 6). Along this same line, two focus group participants shared stories about newcomer students in their classes who wanted more social classroom engagement from their Canadian peers, but did not know exactly how to go about intentionally inviting interaction. Therefore, the teacher taught the students how to intentionally engage their Canadian peers. The teacher described that the newcomer students "don't know how to break in and they are just like 'what do I say?'" We model conversations like "Hey, what did you do this weekend?" or just you know basic general conversation (that) they really struggle with" (Focus Group 2, Participant 1). When we inquired further about this intentional strategy, another participant said,

> *I always tell them, you know, [talk about] something that you both have in common like an assignment that you both just did in a class like "oh, how did you do on that assignment?" like "what did you do for this question?" or you know "what did you think about?" I tell them TV shows that they should be watching so they can talk about that and stuff but they have a really hard time*. (Focus Group 2, Participant 2)

With New Brunswick welcoming almost 1,500 Syrian refugees in the past year (Stewart, 2016), educators in the first school in our case study had to continually scramble in the turbulence associated with the arrival of many students who had escaped the war in their country. One teacher stated, "When our students see what some of these kids have been through or how different life can be, I think that's all good. My thing as a teacher is just to make these students feel comfortable and welcomed" (Teacher Participant 5).

There are many school sub-cultures that are embedded with the dominant ethos of the school. It is a great task to understand each one instrumentally and in fact, it may be impossible to do so. That said, the celebrations of student life and student activity in the school has been initially

described in the study as front and center and it is apparent that the respondents believe students are served well in the school and in their courses. The responses we have received over the first three data sets suggest that the diversity has enhanced the overall climate and culture within the school.

Theme 3: Professional development and learning in the school

Specified and focused professional development to support English as an Additional Language (EAL) students, majority students, teachers, administrators and support staff is minimal in the school discourse and professional learning structures at present. Participants in the study consistently said they would like more focused education sessions on diversity education topics to build their pedagogical and intercultural capacities. Many of them described that they have participated in minimal professional development learning related to topics on diversity, immigration and demographic changes other than what they had enrolled in or studied themselves on their own time.

One participant described professional development related to diversity and demographic change as insufficient at this time. "We need to have at least some of our PD, I would say, if we had a couple each semester just to focus on EAL and international students and how we are working with them" (Administrator Participant 3). Other participants spoke of taking ownership of school professional development. "I love learning and a lot of the PD that we get is neither P nor D so we really try to seek out good speakers, good sessions for our high school council. When I get together with these people, it's very positive and constructive and that's important to me" (Teacher Participant 3). Many teachers in the school work collaboratively to ameliorate some of the complexity they experience through open dialogue with their colleagues. Many suggest that the dialogical moments for collaboration and deeper learning about diversity cannot be "happen-stance." What is clear at this stage of the project is that the school leadership team has provided many educators opportunities for professional growth in diversity education. One administrator suggested the school should look at ways to "embed [diversity] into everything that we do" (Focus Group 1, Participant 2).

Theme 4: Equity, advocacy and social justice

Many teachers are concerned for new immigrant students in their classes, and many are not sure what their expectations should be or how they should adjust their pedagogies and assessment strategies to address the learning and social needs of immigrant students. Early in the study, we observed that some participants were not confident teaching students who only have a functional grasp of the language of instruction – in this case English. One survey respondent wrote, "Sometimes it is difficult to set a standard in grammar, punctuation and fluency. A student may have understandings of deep concepts, but do you grade them on that or the mechanics of language?" This finding also surfaced in both focus group sessions as it was perceived that classroom teachers are still struggling teaching the newcomer students because "Our instruments are language based, so how do we get an accurate reading to put in place the services that these students need?" (Focus Group 1, Participant 3). Still, it has become evident to us as the inquiry continued that the leaders and educators in the school are making progressive strides in effectively responding to their dynamically changing school context. This past year, newcomer and refugee students were welcomed and enrolled continuously into the school community and

many of these students found themselves in responsive and rigorous English as Additional Language (EAL) classes within a developing EAL program.

Some participants recognize that, though they may not have the answers to some of their complex teaching arrangements for their students, they feel committed to do more to learn and advocate for their students. Respondents across all three data sets described how they are differentiating or modifying their instruction to support the needs of their EAL learners in their classes. One focus group respondent captured the proactive behaviors of many of the teachers in the school who described the adjustments they were making in their pedagogies suggesting the entire school had a "moral obligation" to respond to the demographic changes. Another teacher described her response to the students arriving from war-torn Syria and the refugee camps of the Middle East countries:

> *I am a mother and that's where my trigger point goes. I feel for these women who are carrying their children...literally carrying them across countries seeking freedom so that they can have a standing chance for their children…not so much for themselves. And that's where my passion comes from. I think that that is...and so, in turn, to help these women help their children… I want to help their children in school. That is my fight*. (Teacher Participant 4)

Many participants in the study described the social justice and moral actions that they have been conceptualizing and putting into action stages that have been benefitting their students. However, at the time of this report, many were still uncertain whether their actions were having any effect or how far they were reaching into the community.

Theme 5: Cultural awareness and responsiveness

Participants are becoming increasingly aware of the demographic changes occurring in their school and community. We believe this is largely due to the level of the academic involvement and social engagement they have with newcomer students. One participant said,

> *when I came here 8 years ago, we had a small team of teachers who were working with a small group of newcomers or international students. And then two years later for some reason, it exploded. I don't think I really anticipated the number that we have now. But (I am) very, very pleased with where we are right now, especially with the Syrian situation and knowing that we have quality people who are able to handle that*. (Administrator Participant 3)

Earlier in the study, several survey respondents described how they were scrambling in their pedagogical responses to increasing numbers of English Language Learners in their classes. One survey response surprised us when the educator wrote, "As an early career teacher, I haven't seen a large change in demographics as of yet." However, this perception was not reported across the data sets as the inquiry has unfolded, and we have found that educators were responding to the changes. In fact, this theme registered the highest number of "data events" when we were seeking patterns in the coding and analysis stage early in this project. Both focus group sessions and the first ten interviews that we have analyzed for this paper have confirmed our early perceptions that educators have varying levels of awareness and response. One focus

group participant described that “it was important that people understood when they came in they could see what our (school) community was like” (Focus Group 1, Participant 1).

Overall, the school community has embraced its new and evolving cultural identity and has been able to grow organically and authentically. Both focus group sessions, as well as many of the interview participants, have provided insights for optimism and possibility in the school for future cultural and program developments, and most of the participants seemed eager to infuse cultural diversity constructs deeper into the school community and within their courses.

Theme 6: Stress and anxiety

This theme emerged early in our interpretations in the study as participants continuously described the multiple challenges they and their colleagues were confronting working within the diverse context. Some of these challenges included working with students who do not understand the dominant language, working with refugee students who have experienced conflict and war and teachers worrying about their abilities to serve these kids well. One participant said, “I think it’s hardest for the classroom teacher quite honestly because they want to do well. They want to serve their students. I think that they feel, in some cases, unequipped to do so” (Focus Group 1, Participant 4). The feeling of uncertainty and anxiety permeated throughout the interviews and many of the participants often related their anxieties to their own perceived professional efficacy. In one narrative, an educator said, “That doesn’t happen that much but I remember that was something that kind of stuck in my craw a little bit where I felt bad as a teacher, like I wasn’t reaching this kid as well as I should be” (Focus Group 2, Participant 3). With the influx of refugee and newly arrived immigrant students, educators are encountering more students with trauma as well as more students from groups in war-torn countries who are often in conflict with one another. The following narrative captures one teacher’s concern about this reality.

> *We have over 70 countries represented in this school right now. Some of these countries are countries that are in major conflict. We're putting them all in the one school. And we've had little incidents... that, you know, there can be conflict. We bring them all here and we say, "This is a happy place". Well what's the background? And I think we have to be aware of that. But how do you deal with that? These people have grown up in conflict with another culture. And now they're saying, "We're all in the same room. One big happy family*. (Teacher Participant 5)

In response, school leaders have accessed community resources and personnel to provide information to teachers about conflict zones in the world and about what many of their newly arrived students will have faced in their lives. This new understanding has allowed us to regroup data into a sub theme that we call student stress. Prior to their arrival, one participant acknowledged the reality that “we’ll start to see some Syrian refugees, and we’re going to have to deal with not only their language issues but their mental health issues” (Administrator Participant 1). An additional stress some international students in the school face is the pressure from their families to do well in school at the same time when they are trying to fit in and belong in the social fabric of the school.

> *I've had one particular student, I'm thinking of him over the past couple of years, he really struggled because he was totally enjoying being in this culture and was trying to fit*

> *in and be like everybody else, but his parents were still pressuring him, culturally, to be their way. So he used to talk to me all of the time. He felt like he had these two struggles going on*. (Teacher Participant 5)

Pardhan (1998) writes that students in this type of situation are caught between cultures – the one they were raised in and the dominant culture they wish to be part of in order to explore possibilities for friendship and belongingness.

When asked how they deal with their own stress and anxiety, many teachers said they strive to separate their work lives from their personal lives. Exercise, family time, and time for self were often cited as most important for the educators we spoke to.

Themes 7 and 8 intersect: Communication fragmentation and intake process

When we began the study a year ago, the school was swirling in turbulence related to enrolling new immigrant, international, and refugee students and to a great extent it still is. This is largely due to the arrival of new immigrant and refugee students throughout the year. As Dimmock and Walker (2005) illustrate in their research into diversity and multiethnic schools, societal changes in the form of rapid demographic change and increasing diversity will present multiple complexities for educators to respond to. In our early analysis, the complexities the school and all its stakeholders were confronting positioned them in situations where communication was often very fragmented or even absent. One focus group participant said communication with district personnel has improved over the duration of the year. "It's been healthy because we've been able to sit down, [and] have a conversation. So meetings can be set up at any point in time and we can sit down and discuss the value of where we are with our EAL students and where we want to go with our EAL students (Focus Group 1, Participant 1). In the past year, this perception has been confirmed as communication gradually improved among many educational stakeholders when a person was hired at district office to support the ELL students and the developing EAL programs within the district. "When you have a spokesperson from the school district office speaking on your behalf, it means an awful lot, right?" (Administrator Participant 3).

Many participants described in depth that a growing strength for the school are the teachers working in their English as an Additional Language program. The EAL program has gradually developed and gained momentum from one teacher hired to work with English Language Learners (ELLs) several years ago to five teachers learning and working together serving ELL students in the program today.

When looking for additional resources and support for EAL students in class, one teacher said, "I'm going to run to my EAL support group" (Teacher Participant 4). The belief that there was support at hand and on the ground in the school was reiterated over and over in the interviews. However, one focus group participant was still concerned about the level of understanding regarding the impact of demographic change in the school at the provincial government level as well as the perceptions the general public might hold.

> *Even levels of government don't know, let alone Joe public, right? I mean it's a great idea to court families and bring them in for lots of great reasons, but it really leaves us scrambling to say "okay, now what do we do?" Because we are the frontlines here,*

right? And Joe public would have no idea what we've done here at the school. (Focus Group 1, Participant 4)

Intersecting theme: Intake of new students

Another theme that has emerged steadily through the project and stands alone as one of the main themes to date (refer to diagram above) is the intake process at the school. For this paper, the data on intake illustrates strong intersections with the theme of communication fragmentation. When administrators were initially asked when they knew that new immigrant and refugee students would be coming to the school, several focus group participants chuckled when two of their colleagues stated simultaneously, "When they arrived in guidance". For instance, 57 new students arrived to register on the first day in September in 2015. Understandably, educators have found it challenging introducing their new immigrant students into relevant and appropriate educational programs that foster their social and academic development within the school's core program especially when they have to scramble to register them quickly. In this first case study, we found that the rapid pace of registering students has caused many educators additional stress. One survey respondent confirmed the registration chaos stating "international students just arrive here and we would start processing and so our numbers grew. And then we kind of realized there were so many of them and they were coming so fast and furious we'd run out of space" (Survey 6). Another focus group participant described this initial intake process as fragmented and frustrating. "W**e** had been trying to create some kind of a pathway or system when kids came in because before that it was a little bit willy nilly" (Focus Group 1, Participant 2). Sadly, another participant described how the individuals involved in the intake process all got sick at the start of October when the students finally were in their classes and things had settled down somewhat. As we developed the intake theme in the project, we began asking the teacher participants what they knew about the intake process in the school. We soon learned that many of them knew very little. One teacher admitted, "I don't know. I saw that on your list and I was like, I don't even know what that is. What does the intake process...I have no idea!" (Teacher Participant 4). After reflecting on this finding, we believed this was due to the busyness teachers were experiencing in their teaching and extra-curricular service, as well as to the sheer size of the school and the numbers of students attending it. As more and more international, refugee and new immigrant students arrive in the community and eventually find their way to the school to register for classes, it was important in the minds of several of the participants in the study to have a registration and welcoming center for newcomer students and their families. In August of 2016, a new welcoming center was in fact set up, and since then we have learned that the process of welcoming new students into the school and across the district has improved substantially.

Conclusion: Suggestions for Practice and Policy

New Brunswick was one of many provinces that responded to the Canadian government's mandate to welcome 25,000 Syrian refugees early in 2016 (Donkin, 2016). When we began this investigation, our team anticipated that our research protocols would have to be adjusted throughout our data collection to align with emerging realities that often characterize a rapidly changing diverse school. In fact, we slowed our investigation down last spring to give the school staff time to effectively respond to the arrival of the newest wave of refugee students from Syria. In the context of our work described in this paper, learning slowly (Rossman & Rallis, 2003) has proven to be beneficial for our research team. We were able to stay in the school longer than we

initially expected and have benefitted from having ongoing conversations with our participants about the impact of demographic change on their teaching and student learning during the member-check process and chance meetings we had with many of them in other community spaces. In this paper, we have discussed some early key findings and by communicating them back in continuous dialogue with the school stakeholders, we believe we have provided them opportunities to reflect upon and adjust their leadership and classroom pedagogies. Further, we have encouraged participants to consider sharing their ideas and responsive pedagogies with their colleagues. Admittedly, we have found some participants still floundering in the traditional educational mindset that sadly binds many educators in times of rapid change; that is, if all students work hard and remain diligent in their educational pursuits they can achieve success - even the newcomer, new immigrant and refugee students who find themselves in a foreign, unfamiliar and sometimes hostile school and community landscape. Idealistically, we want to believe that this is possible for many newcomer students; however, we have learned that student success is often anchored to the social and cultural capital they bring with them to their new school (Field, 2003). Many new immigrant and refugee students are vulnerable and they need their teachers and strong leadership in the school to help them navigate a very complex Canadian education system and their social environments within their school and community (Shields, 2013; Stewart, 2011). Newcomer students need to feel and experience an immediate sense of belonging and for this to occur, they need all school personnel – teachers, administrators, support staff and especially their Canadian student peers – to intentionally include them in classroom, extra-curricular and social activities (Wilson-Forsberg, 2016). Our team will continue to advocate for teachers, who serve in diverse and intercultural contexts, to have access to intentional support, coaching and mentoring (Searby, 2014), continuous professional development in/on responsive intercultural pedagogies and any additional resources they require to help them respond as effectively as they can to develop and infuse culturally relevant lessons and learning activities into their courses (Cooper, 2009; Gay, 2013). We remain concerned as social justice, participatory researchers that if educators in the school do not open up and expand upon conversations on equity and the importance and value of identifying the school structures that marginalize newcomer students, then much of the recent productive school response to the increasing diversity and immigration that we have reported in this work, may be lost, side-stepped and soon forgotten. We hope this does not happen.

Further, it is critical for teachers, school leaders and policy-makers to work at becoming increasingly aware of the demographic changing trends in their community, province and Atlantic region. Learning about events taking place in foreign countries that cause the destruction of homes, communities and infrastructure and displace people around the world will help individuals in New Brunswick and Atlantic Canadian communities who welcome new immigrant and refugee families and their children when they arrive. Recent government publications and social research strongly suggest that the rapid demographic changes occurring will continue to be encouraged long into New Brunswick's and Atlantic Canada's future; this is because the region needs more people to stabilize and grow the shrinking and aging population as well as support a weak economy (New Brunswick Government, 2016; Wilson-Forsberg, 2016). Atlantic Canadians need to be fit and ready to respond to this reality.

Working within our participatory framework, we will continue to dialogue with teachers and administrators to guide us in conceptualizing suggestions and recommendations for practice and

policy development. As we reported in this paper, we believe that focused professional development on topics related to demographic change, culturally responsive pedagogies, and global events may support educators and leaders in the short term in their learning, teaching and leadership. We suggest that district and school leaders look no further than to their teachers for this leadership. Our research has led us to many strong educators who are already providing excellent service to students in their classrooms, but due to their busy schedules, they are often unable to share what they are performing. If structured effectively, this form of professional learning is relevant and inexpensive and keeps professional and para-professional staff in the school and district collaboratively learning together and working toward their own solutions to the complexities they are facing. For instance, one participant told us bluntly that he felt what he was doing in his classroom "was not perfect" (Teacher Participant 14); however, as we listened to him and further explored his narrative on tape during data analysis, we were inspired by the service he was providing and told him later than he needs to share his wisdom widely. We suggest face to face collaboration during monthly professional learning meetings as well as ongoing professional dialoguing through online and professional social media platforms.

All the participants we have spoken to have, to varying degrees, expressed their relief and gratitude that the school was being administrated and led by a strong and supportive leadership team – not only at the front office, but throughout the school. It is a leadership team that counts on their teachers and believes in them. And though we have not had the opportunity at this stage of our inquiry to invite and interview new immigrant, refugee, English, French or Wolostoqey students to gain their perceptions of the rapid demographic changes, we will cycle back to the school to gather student data in 2017 before we proceed to the second case study. However, we do report here that we have been able to glean multiple educator perceptions who tell the common story of students in the school contributing responsive leadership in their classrooms, extra-curricular school activities and through community-engaging multicultural celebrations.

Lastly, some participants have reported that they are concerned that newcomer students are not integrating successfully into the school. The student stories we gather will help us confirm or challenge the perceptions of any competing worldviews in the school and the impact they may be having on school culture and learning. Unfortunately, at this time in our history, conflicting worldviews and ideologies are gaining momentum in the media. Referencing the political climate in parts of North America, Parker Palmer (2016) reminded CBC listeners that there is a way forward to bridge competing worldviews and work toward hope and peace. The renowned educator and philosopher suggested that people,

> "stop throwing ideologies at each other and start telling stories of our own life. What do we love? What do we fear? It turns out we love a lot of the same things; we fear a lot of the same things. And if we keep it on the story-telling level we can eventually come to a place of human convergence where we may not change each other's minds but we will be reminded that in the long run, it's much more important to be in the right relationship than it is to be right and that to me is a hopeful fact" (interview with CBC Tapestry host, Mary Hynes).

We will continue to stay mindful of the importance of giving the stories back to the participants to help us understand the complexities they are facing. We will continue to support them as well

as we can, for as long as we can through the course of our study and we will not simply study them.

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