

LEARNING FROM CHANGE:
HOW TEACHERS ADAPT TO DEMOGRAPHIC STUDENT POPULATION CHANGES

A Dissertation
presented to
the Faculty of the Graduate School
at the University of Missouri-Columbia

In Partial Fulfilment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctorate of Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis

by
GARY GABEL
Dr. Lisa Dorner, Dissertation Supervisor

May 2017

The undersigned, appointed by the dean of the Graduate School, have examined the dissertation entitled

LEARNING FROM CHANGE:
HOW TEACHERS ADAPT TO DEMOGRAPHIC STUDENT POPULATION CHANGES

presented by Gary Gabel,
a candidate for the degree of doctor of Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis,
and hereby certify that, in their opinion, it is worthy of acceptance.

Dr. Lisa Dorner

Dr. Emily Crawford-Rossi

Dr. Ty-Ron Douglas

Dr. Casandra Harper-Morris

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank four people who have been instrumental in this journey and without whose help and guidance, this adventure would not have been realized.

First, I wish to thank my amazing wife. Joan has been my inspiration and my biggest supporter even when I was not deserving of her kindness. I would not be the person I am today without her, and I am blessed to share my life with her.

Second, I would like to thank Cindy Antrim. Cindy hired me as a kindergarten teacher, and then saw leadership potential in me which she nurtured by bringing me into the administration fold. She was my first mentor, and I still value her friendship.

I am truly thankful for my advisor Dr. Lisa Dorner. As I reflect on this journey, she has been everything that a mentor should be, and I am fortunate for the opportunity to learn from her. She has kept me accountable, and throughout this experience, she has been patient and responsive and I am forever grateful.

Finally, I would like to thank Adrienne Patton, Principal and friend. Adrienne exemplifies what I strive to be as a leader. She truly wants and does what she can to help each person in her employ reach their personal and professional goals. Thank you for opening up your school for me and sharing your wisdom.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgements.....	ii
List of Tables.....	vii
List of Figures.....	viii
Abstract.....	ix
1. INTRODUCTION.....	1
Background	2
Statement of the Problem.....	3
Purpose of the Study.....	5
Research Questions.....	6
Conceptual Framework.....	6
Design of Study.....	9
Qualitative Case Study.....	9
Setting.....	10
Participants.....	12
Data Collection Tools.....	14
Data Analysis.....	20
Limitations and Assumptions.....	24
Definitions of Key Terms.....	25
Significance of Study.....	26
Summary.....	27
2. PRACTITIONER SETTING.....	29
Introduction to the Practitioner Setting.....	30

A Transformational Opportunity- My Personal Experience in this Setting...	30
History of the Organization.....	31
Park School.....	33
Organizational Analysis.....	34
Leadership Analysis.....	35
An Example of a Leader Who Fosters Growth.....	36
Implications.....	37
Summary.....	38
3. SCHOLARLY REVIEW.....	39
Conceptual Framework.....	40
Transformational Learning.....	40
Background of transformational learning.....	41
Experience.....	42
Reflection.....	43
Disequilibrium.....	44
Research on Transformational Learning and Teaching.....	46
Current Status of Literature.....	48
District Responses to Changing Demographics: Professional Development.....	49
District Responses to Changing Demographic: Policy.....	52
Teachers' Responses to Changing Demographics.....	54
Veteran Teachers' Responses to Professional Development.....	56
Summary.....	58

4. CONTRIBUTION TO SCHOLARSHIP.....	61
Introduction to Findings.....	62
A Review of Methods, Data Collection, and Analysis.....	63
Diversity as Positive Multicultural Change	64
Diversity as Challenging Changes.....	65
Defining a “Demographic Change” at Park School.....	64
Relationships and Assumptions.....	69
Prior Experience with Diversity.....	75
A Pedagogical Toolbox.....	77
Family Interactions.....	80
Discussion.....	81
Implications.....	84
Summary.....	86
5. CONTRIBUTION TO PRACTICE.....	87
Plan for Dissemination.....	88
Target Journals.....	89
Summary.....	90
Where Do I Go from Here?.....	90
6. REFERENCES.....	92
7. APPENDICES	
Appendix A Initial Teacher Survey.....	102
Appendix B Life Story Protocol.....	104
Appendix C Follow-up Interview Questions.....	106

Appendix D Policy Brief.....107
Vita.....108

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Park School and Middletown District Student Populations.....	11
Table 2: Teacher Participant Demographic Information.....	14
Table 3: Demographics of Teachers Completing Questionnaire.....	17
Table 4: Demographics of Teachers Participating in Follow-up Interview.....	20
Table 5: Defining Diversity at Park School.....	66-67
Table 6: “A ha” Moments.....	70
Table 7: Teaching Strategies for ELL Students.....	78

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Sample of Possible Data.....	21
Figure 2: Selection from Actual Data Table.....	22-23
Figure 3: Concept Map for Transformational Learning Theory.....	45
Figure 4: Revised Concept Map for Transformational Learning Theory.....	82

ABSTRACT

This research explores how veteran teachers respond to demographic changes in their school's student populations, specifically: When demographic change occurs in a student population, how do veteran teachers respond? What are the veteran teachers' beliefs and practices as they interact with students who differ from the ones they have always taught? Specifically, do veteran teachers continue with similar (1) beliefs about students, (2) pedagogical approaches, and (3) ways of interacting with family members? Or do teachers develop new ideas and approaches, perhaps viewing the changes as an opportunity for growth or a transformational learning experience? Framed by transformational learning theory, this research has implications for designing professional development for other veteran teachers.

Seventeen veteran teachers took part in this qualitative study at an elementary school in the Midwestern United States, which was representative of many schools across the country experiencing rapid changes in the proportion of students from immigrant and lower socioeconomic families. Participants completed online questionnaires and semi-structured face-to-face interviews.

Over 74% of the veteran teacher participants believed success with a new student population only occurred after forming relationships with individual students. Thus, relationships, rather than standardized instructional practices, determined academic agendas and sometimes led to a transformational change in teachers' beliefs. Findings suggest that in conjunction with other professional development, school leaders should add instruction for teachers on how to build and understand the importance of relationships with students.

Keywords- Demographic Change, English Language Learners, Professional Development, Transformational Learning, Veteran Teacher

SECTION ONE:
INTRODUCTION

Background

American schools are constantly evolving. What once seemed predictable is now a dynamic, rapidly changing environment. Schools are experiencing an influx of impoverished students with attending needs as well as increasing numbers of culturally and linguistically diverse students with a wide range of educational expectations (Portes & Rumbaut, 1996; Portes & Rumbaut, 2001; Ellen, O'Regan et al., 2009; Kaplan & Owings, 2013). According to Turner (2014), one-third of the children in the United States live in poverty, and one-fourth of the students in the United States under eighteen belong to immigrant families. Amidst these dramatic changes, we have a veteran teaching force whose methodology of instruction was formed prior to these diverse changes that impact their classrooms. Research shows that minority students from poorer schools are much more likely to have teachers who are not certified and are far less qualified than their majority counterparts (Adamson & Darling-Hammond, 2012). As a result, America's education system increasingly fails to meet the needs of many of our students, especially these groups who have the greatest educational needs (Darling-Hammond 2004).

In order to create successful learning environments for our increasingly diverse student population, teachers' practices and how leaders support their development must also evolve. Reflection, self-efficacy, and feedback, which is provided by a supportive leader, are crucial to a teacher's growth (Runhaar, Sanders & Yang, 2010). Although current research offers guidance on how to prepare new teachers to create classrooms that support diverse student populations (Daniel & Friedman, 2005; Garcia et al., 2010; Marbley et al., 2007; Portes & Smagorinsky, 2010), there is far less research on

professional development opportunities for veteran teachers who are already working in demographically changing classrooms.

In response, this qualitative case study will explore the experiences of veteran teachers and offer their stories as a means of understanding and making the most out of potential opportunities for growth that occur when one's teaching circumstances change. Specifically, a case study of 17 teachers in one school that had experienced shifts in its proportion of students from immigrant and low socioeconomic families will be used to examine these research questions: When demographic change occurs in a student population, how do veteran teachers respond, if at all? What are veteran teachers' beliefs and practices as they interact with students who differ from the ones that they have always taught? Specifically, do veteran teachers continue with similar (1) beliefs about students, (2) pedagogical approaches, and (3) ways of interacting with family members? Or do teachers develop new ideas and approaches, perhaps viewing the changes as an opportunity for growth or a transformational learning experience?

Statement of the Problem

Our present K-12 teaching force, which is 84% female and 84% white (National Center for Education Information, 2011), faces significant changes in the demographics of student populations with little professional development directly related to those changes. Teachers in the U.S. generally do not reflect, or look like, the heterogeneous groups of students they teach. Studies show that current teachers are not prepared for this growing demographic shift (Marbley, 2007; O'Hara & Pritchard, 2008), and when the demographic changes are addressed, educators may do more harm than good (Turner, 2015). For example, in a study of one Texas school district, Holme, Diem, and Welton

(2014) found that a school district's half-hearted attempts at creating programs to foster teacher growth about changing demographics were sometimes well-intentioned but did not promote the inclusion of those changing demographics.

The reality is that teachers can no longer be trained to work with a homogeneous classroom of students (Marbley et al., 2007; O'Hara & Pritchard, 2008). Without preparation, teachers generalize and use what they already know about teaching a specific group of predominantly white students, as a barometer for how they should teach a drastically different population of students, who may learn in different ways (Garcia et al., 2010). Many teachers in the U.S., predominantly white and female, feel ill-prepared to instruct students from backgrounds different from their own (Garcia et al., 2010; Ray & Bowman, 2003).

While we know that school populations of English language learners (ELLs) and/or immigrants are changing rapidly, in many areas, we know little about how or whether a teacher's practices and beliefs about these new students change as the student population changes. How do we determine whether a teacher has made specific paradigm changes in the way they apply their craft, or do their beliefs about students remain constant, regardless of the student demographics? There is a small but growing body of related research on how administrators manage and lead through the changing demographics of school populations (Evans, 2007; Finnigan & Stewart, 2009; Miller & Martin, 2015); however, little is known about how or whether veteran teachers adapt their pedagogies for these diverse populations, and in turn, how leaders can support their professional development.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative case study is to first examine how veteran teachers' attitudes and beliefs might adapt in the midst of significant student population changes. Additionally, this research will attempt to determine if a teacher perceives that he or she has gone through a transformational change after the experience of teaching through demographic shifts. As previously stated, there is existing research about the effects of demographic change on school leadership (Evans, 2007; Finnigan & Stewart, 2009; Miller & Martin, 2015), but little has been heard from veteran teachers who teach these changing populations. This study fills a void in the current literature pertaining to veteran teachers' perceptions and experiences about the shift in the demographic student population changes in their classrooms.

Additionally, through analysis of teachers who adapted (or not) in various ways, this study will make recommendations for how to support teachers who may be going through a transformation and/or experiencing significant population changes in their schools. This qualitative research allows us to hear stories directly from veteran teachers through in-depth case studies about their perspectives of the changes, and learn where or how they found support during these times of change. These veteran teachers can then provide support, mentorship, and professional development for our novice teachers. Conversely, if teacher pedagogy, relationships with students, and paradigms do not change as student population changes, are there any learning opportunities that can help schools adapt and help school leaders prepare their veteran teachers? In either case, the goal is to understand best practices for veteran teachers' professional development and growth, when they experience student population changes at their schools.

Research Questions

The guiding research questions for this study are as follows: When demographic change occurs in a student population, how do veteran teachers respond? What are the veteran teachers' beliefs and practices as they interact with students who differ from the ones they have always taught? Specifically, do veteran teachers continue with similar (1) beliefs about students, (2) pedagogical approaches, and (3) ways of interacting with family members? Or do teachers develop new ideas and approaches, perhaps viewing the changes as an opportunity for growth or a transformational learning experience?

Conceptual Framework

Adult transformational learning is essentially taking one's reflections on previously held assumptions and experiences in the light of new learning or situations, which conflicts and challenges those existing views, causing one to change his or her perspective. Mezirow (1991) was the first scholar to discuss transformational learning as an adult learning process. While discussing transformative learning, Mezirow (1991) stated the following.

Perspective transformation is the process of becoming critically aware of how and why our assumptions have come to constrain the way we perceive, understand, and feel about our world; changing these structures of habitual expectation to make possible a more inclusive, discriminating, and integrative perspective; and, finally, making choices or otherwise acting upon these new understandings. (p. 167)

As Mezirow's definition of transformation explains, it is crucial that the learner is willing to accept that the way they have always thought about an experience may be blocking them from allowing new perspectives to enter their new reality.

The life experiences of the learner are the key characteristics in adult learning (Merriam & Bierema, 2014). We use those previous experiences to help us understand new situations or experiences (Mezirow, 1991). One way we accomplish this is through the use of metaphors. As adults, we use metaphors to explain existing similarities and differences between the past experience and the new situation (Mezirow, 1991; Schön, 1983). As adult learners, we draw on these metaphors to understand experiences, however each one of us has unique experiences, values, and social norms on which to draw. Therefore, we must process these experiences through reflection and discourse with others, which is the next step in the transformational learning process.

There are three types of reflection, but only one of which leads to true transformative learning (Mezirow, 1991). Mezirow stated, "*Content reflection* is thinking about the actual experience itself; *process reflection* is thinking about how to handle the experience; and *premise reflection* involves examining long-held socially constructed assumptions, beliefs and values about the experience or problem" (p. 62). It is through premise reflection that the adult learner uses metaphors which Schön (1983) and Mezirow (1991) agree help us extend meaning to a current situation. Premise reflection or deep introspective questioning forces individuals to challenge their own beliefs which is necessary in moving along the process toward transformational learning. Other researchers also discuss this deeper reflection which Mezirow says is necessary for transformational learning. In reference to the deep reflection which causes one to

challenge and change their perspective, Kegan (1982) used the term disequilibrium, or what Mezirow (2000) called a disorienting dilemma, in which the learner is confronted with a situation that is not explained by what is already known by the learner. That disequilibrium, disorienting dilemma, or challenge to our beliefs ties back to what Mezirow believes about transformational learning. Mezirow thought the learner may have a specific view of the world prior to a transformational learning experience, and he or she may not be aware that there are other views with just as much credibility. Learning that there are other perspectives and views which individuals then acknowledge are just as important as their own can cause a disequilibrium; along with deep reflection and rational discourse, such experiences could lead to transformational learning.

For teachers who have only experienced teaching students who look like themselves, a significant student demographic population change could present itself as a new or unique experience, hence setting the stage for transformational learning to occur. The teacher must be willing to accept that the students they now instruct may each bring different cultural, racial, religious, and other perspectives to the classroom that may differ from their own perspectives. On a physical level, it may be easy for the teacher to recognize that there are differences in his or her students, but on a deeper level, the teacher must also recognize and accept that there may be cultural differences or other perspectives that are equally valid to his or her own. If the teacher has a positive transformational learning experience while working with a significant population change, are we then able to examine the path the teacher traveled to “be transformed?” Can we use that information to share or help replicate those experiences with other teachers and

school leaders, if such transformations are deemed positive for the teaching and learning experiences in that school?

In summary, the components are in place for teachers to participate in transformational learning experiences. Our present teaching force is predominantly white and does not reflect our changing student population (Cochran-Smith & Zeichner, 2005). If Mezirow's idea of a new or unique experience for teachers could be the significant demographic student population changes, and if those teachers also have the capacity to see beyond their own worldview perspectives, transformational learning may occur.

Design of Study

Because this study focuses on teachers' beliefs and experiences, a qualitative design is necessary, as qualitative methods are "a means for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem" (Creswell, 2009, p. 4). Specifically, in order to understand teachers and transformative learning experiences, this study examined the experiences and perspectives of veteran teachers whose school had undergone a significant demographic change. The following sections will discuss the method, setting, participants, data collection tools, and data analysis for the study.

Qualitative Case Study

This dissertation employed a case study methodology, aiming to develop an "in-depth description and analysis of a bounded system" (Merriam, 2009, p. 40). This study is considered *bounded*, in Merriam's (2009) conception, because "there is a limit to the number of people involved who could be interviewed or a finite time for observations" (p. 41). Specifically, this study included only teachers who experienced significant

demographic change among the students in their classrooms. As explained in the next section, these teachers were purposefully chosen from one particular school in the Midwest that had recently experienced significant demographic changes: when it shifted from being a neighborhood public school to a “cluster” school where English Language Learners from throughout the district were bused. (The National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE, 2008) define an English Language Learner (ELL) as, “an active learner of the English language who may benefit from various types of language support programs.” NCTE goes on to explain that ELLs may be exposed to some, none, or only English spoken in the home.)

Setting

In order for this research to take place, a certain situation had to occur. The school had to have undergone a significant shift in demographic student population. In this case, the school district under study (pseudonym: Middletown) had recently adopted an English Language Learner (ELL) cluster model. In a cluster model, ELL students are bused from their home school to a central district school in order to consolidate district resources. During 2010/2011 in this district, the new ELL cluster model created schools with a large increase in their ELL student population. One of these schools was Park School (a pseudonym), which had a number of veteran teachers working before, during, and after the demographic change in its student population.

Around 2010/2011, Park School became one of these English Language Learner (ELL) cluster schools. Prior to the 2010/2011 school year, the student population at Park School was between 650 and 690 students. The 2009 school year represented Park’s highest Asian population to date representing 13.5% of the total student body. When the

district moved to the cluster school model in the 2010/2011 school year, there were 685 total students at Park School. During that school year, the biggest, while not enormous change was the increase in Hispanic and low-socioeconomic students. The trend of an increasing Hispanic population was similar to other metropolitan areas in the state at the time (MO.gov, 2017). At that time, the Asian student population grew to represent 16.6% of the student body, and the Hispanic student population represented 5.4% of the total students at Park. Interestingly, the Free and Reduced Price Lunch (FARL) population also grew from 19.4% in 2009 to 24.6% in the 2010/2011 school year. This meant that many of the new families coming to Park School were of a lower socioeconomic background.

Table 1

Park School and Middletown District Student Populations

Students	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Total Students	690	685	689	631	664	677	724	707
% Asian at Park/District	13.5/5.2	16.6/5.7	15.4/5.1	14.7/5.3	13.1/5.1	13.9/5.4	12.6/5.1	13.0/5.1
% Hispanic at Park/District	*/*	5.4/*	6.1/5.1	7.8/5.4	6.6/5.6	6.9/6.0	7.0/6.1	5.9/6.3
% Black at Park/District	9.3/22.6	10.5/23.4	8.1/20.2	7.9/19.9	7.7/20.0	8.0/19.9	10.4/20.2	10.3/20.1
% White at Park/District	73.2/67.9	67.4/66.2	64.7/63.7	63.5/63.3	65.7/63.2	65.3/62.4	64.0/62.1	63.4/61.7
% Free and Reduced Lunch at Park/District	19.4/36.0	24.6/38.9	23.5/38.9	23.6/40.0	21.2/39.7	22.6/40.1	28.5/41.2	28.6/45.0

Note. **Indicates percent has been suppressed due to a potential small sample size

Park School was originally opened to relieve overcrowding in two other nearby schools and is centrally located within the school district. The school district was chosen for this study, because I previously worked there as an administrator in several schools within the district. I was able to witness first-hand the way populations frequently shifted around the district, due to the opening of new schools and the redrawing of boundary lines, as well as the general increase in ELL and free and reduced price lunch populations.

While Park School is ideal for this specific study, the phenomenon of changing demographics it experienced is not unique and can be seen across the country. As I explained earlier, school populations are changing and our teaching force may not be adequately prepared. Park School is representative of many schools experiencing changing student populations.

Participants

Since opening its doors, Park School had consistently been one of the biggest elementary schools in the district. With well over 600 students each year, Park has had one principal, one assistant principal and about four or five teachers per grade level. At the time of this study, the teachers were predominantly white, female, and averaged around fifteen years of teaching experience. Close to 80% of the teachers had an advanced degree. While Park School had 38 certified teachers, only 21 met the study's requirement of teaching before, during, and after the demographic shift.

As previously mentioned, in order to be eligible for this study, participants had to be teaching before, during, and after the demographic shift in population, and they had to be considered "veteran" teachers. For the purposes of this study, a veteran teacher is a

non-novice educator who has been teaching for more than five years. This number was chosen partly because it would capture experienced teachers, who were working at Park during the demographic shifts. In addition, it is difficult to find a standard definition of a veteran teacher; the literature does not provide a consistent interpretation. Some say after a teacher is tenured (three years) they become a veteran (IGI Global, 2017), and others say when the teacher no longer feels like a novice they become a veteran (We Are Teachers, 2015). On average, the participants in this study had 20 years of teaching experience, and thus, they far exceeded the minimum years of “veteran” teacher recommended by literature. (See Table 2.)

In order to do research at Park School, it was first necessary to seek approval from administration and follow the district’s procedure by obtaining permission from the district. After final permission from the district, school, and the university’s Institutional Review Board was secured, I visited the school district and met with local administration in the fall of 2016, and further explained the research and the possible contribution to future learning for other teachers and leaders in similar situations.

Table 2

Teacher Participant Demographic Information

Teacher	Sex	Ethnicity	Grade	Years Teaching	Years at Park	Level of Ed
B6	F	W	SpEd	17	10	BS
C1	F	W	K	25	15	BS
A2	F	W	K	16	15	MEd
B1	F	W	1	21	16	MEd
B3	F	W	2	21	15	MEd
C3	F	W	2	17	13	MEd
B2	F	W	3	10	10	MEd
B7	F	B	3	29	14	MEd
A1	F	W	5	7	7	MEd
B4	F	W	4	23	5	MEd
D1	M	W	5	17	5	BS
B5	F	W	5	15	10	MEd
A3	F	W	ELL	21	11	MEd
A5	F	W	ELL	33	15	MEd
C2	F	W	ELL	12	12	MEd
A4	F	W	SLP	35	12	MA
A6	F	W	Art	25	14	MEd

Data Collection Tools

This study used multiple data collection methods. All teachers, regardless of years of experience, received a general questionnaire via email (Appendix A) and a request to participate in the study. All veterans who met the study's requirements and consented were interviewed. Subsequently, I interviewed 17 Park School teachers. (See Table 2.) In this type of in-depth qualitative study, this is an ideal number of participants. With this amount, the researcher is better able to focus on the details and more deeply understand individuals' experiences and perspectives. Those details and focus may get lost with multiple sites and multiple participants (Creswell, 2009).

Once the initial participants were identified, data collection began and participants were asked via email to give their informed consent to participate in the research.

Institutional Review Board (IRB) consent is required because the research involves human subjects. Since the research required honest, personal, and sometimes difficult accounts of classroom interactions, I assured the participants of confidentiality and let them know I would not use their names or any other identifying characteristics.

Questionnaire. Once the before mentioned requirements were satisfied, certain demographic information was collected via email questionnaire from and about the teachers at Park School. Ideally, the teachers would come from varied backgrounds themselves. This study explores what additional factors might shape teachers' responses to demographic change, from their own professional preparation and school contexts, to their personal, cultural, racial, and linguistic experiences. It may be determined through this research that certain factors about the teacher's background and experiences may impact their ability to change as the student population changes. For example, it is important to know the race or ethnicity of the teacher, their own experiences as a student, and his or her years of teaching experience, as these previous experiences play a role in transformational learning. This questionnaire also asked the teacher's level of education, and a few questions designed to have him or her reflect on their classroom experience (Appendix A). Responses to these questions may factor into the teacher's attitude toward change, as discussed further in Section Three.

In addition to the general personal demographic questions on the questionnaire, the participants answered questions about their experience with the demographic student population changes. Specific questions on the survey included giving a specific classroom event which caused him or her to change their thinking. This event and change in thinking would be the disequilibrium needed for transformation. The teachers' answers

helped guide my thinking about whether the participant made no changes to their teaching, moderate or surface changes to their teaching, or whether the participant possibly had a transformational experience as a result of the transition.

The *Qualtrics* questionnaire was sent via email to all 38 certified teachers at Park School regardless of their previous teaching experience. I was curious how these responses would relate to my future interviews with only veteran teachers. However, only six of the 38 certified teachers responded to the questionnaire. I can only attribute the low number of returned Qualtrics questionnaires to the distribution method for the request for completion. The principal put a link and request from me to complete the surveys in a Monday morning newsletter to the faculty. My assumption is that the request was either not seen or was simply ignored.

However, five of the six teachers who completed the survey were veteran teachers, who taught an average of 19 years. (See Table 3.) Also, five of the six teachers were at Park School prior to and during the demographic shift in student population. Later, after comparing results of both data collection methods, it appeared that at least three of the five veterans completing the questionnaire also participated in the interviews. All of the questionnaire's respondents were female and all had a minimum of a Master's degree. All respondents were White except one veteran who listed her race/ethnicity as "Black or African-American." The only non-veteran respondent listed her race/ethnicity as "other."

Table 3

Demographics of Teachers Completing Questionnaire

Teacher	Sex	Ethnicity	Total Years Teaching	Years at Park	Level of Ed
A	F	Other	2	1	Masters
B	F	White	15	13	Masters
C	F	White	5	Unanswered	Masters
D	F	White	25	14	Masters
E	F	White	23	5	Masters
F	F	Black or African-American	29	14	Specialist

Interviews. The Questionnaire responses also helped prepare for the next stage of the research study, which included interviews with the participants. (See Appendix B for the interview protocol). All veteran teachers, regardless of questionnaire completion, who met the study's requirements at Park School were contacted directly via email about participation in the study.

At Park School, at the time of this study, there were 21 teachers who met the criteria necessary to participate. The 21 teachers may or may not have decided to complete the previously-mentioned questionnaire. Since I worked as an administrator in the school, I went through the current school yearbook and compiled a list of those teachers I knew had been at the school for at least five years (prior to the demographic shift). I gave that list to the current principal for confirmation that those teachers were teaching at Park School prior to the demographic change. The principal confirmed that those 21 teachers met my requirements. Next, I sent an emailed addressed to each veteran teacher requesting their participation in the study. Based on the relationships I built at Park School and individualized emails I sent, 17 teachers agreed to be interviewed.

All but one of the participants was female, and only one participant was African-American while the remaining teachers were White. (See Table 2.) The average total teaching experience among the 17 participants was 20 years, and the average experience teaching at Park School was 12 years. Within the group of 17 teachers, 82% had an advanced degree, and over 75% of the teachers had lived in the state in which they were teaching for their entire lives. All elementary grade levels were represented by the participating teachers. Additionally, all three veteran ELL teachers, art, and special education teachers who were at Park School before and during the population shift were represented. The relatively high level of education of participants (82% of veteran teachers at Park had an advanced degree) is slightly higher than the national average of 54% (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2016).

I conducted all of the interviews at Park School in the respective teacher's classroom with the exception of one interview which took place after hours. All interviews were audio recorded and later transcribed by TranscribeCheap.com. Most interviews were approximately 45 minutes in duration. Since the interviews were transcribed by an outside company, assurances of confidentiality needed to be confirmed. The company secures its online systems and audio files via SSL, so that information is transmitted securely. After transcription, the company deletes the audio files and 7-10 days after the transcription is sent to the customer, the transcription is also deleted from their local storage.

The interview began by asking about the teacher's experiences as a student and their educational life before teaching, as past experiences might help explain their current ideas and perspectives about working with students. Next, I asked questions about the

participant's current classroom, his or her beliefs as a teacher, and finally, I asked about any experiences which may have led to changes in their teaching practice (Appendix B).

As young students, 13 participants were products of public schools themselves, however, four of the teachers attended private church-affiliated schools. All but two teachers had pleasant memories of their initial schooling. One of those two teachers admitted that she often struggled in school and the other teacher said school was not something they cared for much at all. Most participants did not have a lot of exposure to cultural, racial, and religious diversity in school, especially those who attended church-affiliated private schools. Two of the teachers did have experiences in their schooling where they were among the minority population. One White teacher moved from an all-White school in New Mexico to a predominantly Hispanic school in the same district. The only African-American participant had a much different experience moving to an all-White school within her district.

Follow-up interviews. After reviewing the collected data, I requested follow-up interviews with four of the teachers from the original 17 participants. I chose these four teachers for several reasons. First, each of these teachers had a transformational experience that was evident in the stories they told. Each of the teachers gave thoughtful and detailed responses to the original interview questions, and they represented a cross section of the overall group. I also thought these teachers would better help me understand what the term "diversity" meant to the faculty at Park School, as this term was used in a variety of ways as Section Four will demonstrate. Finally, each of these teachers mentioned the importance of relationships, and I wanted to further explore that concept. Only three of the four teachers agreed to the follow-up interview. One teacher requested

responding in writing which she did, and I conducted phone interviews with the other two teachers each lasting approximately 20 minutes. (See questions asked in Appendix C). They were forthcoming with responses, and they gave me additional insight into the meaning of diversity and how they viewed Park School's reputation as a multicultural school.

Table 4

Demographics of Teachers Participating in Follow-up Interviews

Teacher	Sex	Ethnicity	Total Years Teaching	Years at Park	Level of Ed
B7	F	Black	29	14	Masters
B2	F	White	10	10	Masters
C2	F	White	12	12	Masters

Data Analysis

I had all 17 interviews transcribed, and I analyzed the collected data for themes and categories. The best way to analyze qualitative data is to study it in real time as it is collected (Merriam, 2009). Bogdan and Biklen (2003) offer clear suggestions for qualitative data analysis. Several of the suggestions involve writing comments and memos which help the researcher reflect during data collection processes. Initially, I used open coding while looking for themes and categories. Open coding is a type of shorthand designed to find themes and categories while the researcher keeps an open mind (Merriam, 2009). The research questions and the theoretical framework helped guide the search for themes and categories in the collected data in subsequent coding processes, as detailed here.

Originally, I thought the research gathered would be organized in a variety of tables, and I proposed a possible data collection table, which is pictured below (Figure 1). I expected to hear about classroom diversity, but I also expected other information to be straightforward and not embedded in stories. However, as I read through the first few transcribed interviews, I created a new chart (Figure 2). I used the ideas from my research questions as headers for each column. I put short phrases or anecdotes from the teachers' stories under those headers where I thought they belonged. I began to notice key themes about relationships and diversity in the stories teachers told. Next, I made a list of words related to *relationships*, *diversity*, and *change* as I kept reading. After my initial reading of all the transcripts, I gathered the word list I generated and used the search function in Microsoft Word to go back through each transcript specifically looking for those words and any pertinent information.

Figure 1

Sample of Possible Data

Teacher	Race	Age	Years Exp	Gender	Level of Ed	Current Classroom	Childhood Experience	Reflect?	Teaching Experience	Beliefs ?
T-A	W	29	10	M	BS	ELL	Moved	W/Admin	No comm	Changes
T-B	B	31	9	F	MEd	ELL, Low SES	Happy	Teachers	Diverse	Students all the same
T-C	W	53	20	F	BS	Poverty, ELL	Diversity	In car	Home visits	Help others grow
T-D	W	33	19	F	BS	High Poverty	Same Place	Family	No feedback	Students should adapt to my way

Note: New Event, Reflection, Disequilibrium, Transformation

Figure 2

Selection from Actual Data Table

T Code	Gr	Sex	Total Years Exp	Years at Park	Ed Level	Beliefs about students	Pedagogical Approaches
B3	2nd	F	21	15	M	-Student died one year and testing plus everything else was not as important as helping them deal with life	-I bring my kids here because I want them to have the multi-cultural experience
B2	3rd	F	10	10	M	-Many new students to Paxton this year and they don't have relationships with anyone -Difficult for students in poverty sitting next to privileged students	- Relationship with students is huge -People that make the rules haven't experienced what I'm experiencing

(continued)

Figure 2

Selection from Actual Data Table (continued)

T Code	Assumptions	Interactions with Family	Other	Background	Beliefs/ Epiphany	Change in Teaching
B3	-Necklace was stolen and I made a snap judgement of who took it. I was wrong and kicked myself for assuming			-Started in small town in same state -Moved in middle school to an established group friends – difficult -I like to work with people who want to make things better	-Student passed away and students learned more about that than anything else that year -It helped me see that testing etc isn't what's important	-I made an assumption about a theft and prejudged a student.
B2	-Issues in a class could have been me too I step back and realize that these are still kids and maybe my expectations are too high	-Parents used to be too involved -Emails but no responses- Same with phone calls -Newsletter blogs -Carnival	- Constantly new staff -Young faculty	-Private school -Stayed in state -No exposure to diversity -Favorite teacher built relationships with students early on	-Behavior student was hard to like but forged the relationship and I told myself he will be successful	

Afterward, I moved on to what Merriam (2009) describes as, “A third level of analysis involves making inferences, developing models, or generating theory” (p. 188). This process involves looking at the larger picture to see how all the pieces connect to form concepts. Once all of the data are analyzed, writing can begin. This research was designed to help teachers and school leaders better understand how they can learn about significant demographic student population changes from veteran educators who have experienced these changes first hand. Therefore, with educators as the study’s main audience, the information was written with them in mind.

Limitations and Assumptions

There are of course limitations to this research. The first limitation is that the study took place in only one school district and region of the United States. While representative of many school districts, this school system does not represent all school systems in the country. Although no longer employed with the Middletown School District, a second limitation is that I worked as an administrator in several of the schools within that district. Participants who knew me may have taken that relationship into account when responding to specific questions: perhaps they would have been hesitant to admit certain perspectives to me, given my leadership roles. As an administrator, I was responsible for their teaching evaluations, and at the time of this research, I maintained relationships with the current administration. That said, the previous relationships between individuals in Middletown and myself seemed helpful to this study, because there was an existing atmosphere of trust where teachers were more willing to share. Another limitation is that I was unable to observe the participating teachers prior to and during the demographic shift, and the responses are based solely on teacher perceptions

and stories. In other words, I was unable to witness teacher interactions with students or families.

One key assumption made in this research is that teachers enjoy teaching and want all students to achieve. Additionally, it can be assumed that if a teacher who experiences a demographic student population change, and has a transformational learning experience, will not only feel successful in and out the classroom, but his or her students may enjoy success as well. If a teacher believes a student can attain success, the student is halfway down the road to succeeding. Along those same lines, it is my assumption that the transformation would be positive however, negative transformations are also a possibility.

Definitions of Key Terms

Demographic Change. In this study, demographic change refers to a shift in the diversity of a school's student population from predominantly white to a heterogeneous group of students from different races, nationalities, and economic statuses.

Diverse Student Populations. For the purpose of this research, diverse student populations refer to a heterogeneous group of students who come from different races, ethnic backgrounds, linguistic, religious, and socioeconomic levels.

English Language Learners (ELL). The National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE, 2008) define an English Language Learner (ELL) as, "an active learner of the English language who may benefit from various types of language support programs." NCTE goes on to explain that ELLs may be exposed to some, none, or only English spoken in the home.

Free and Reduced Price Lunch (FARL). According to the United States Department of Agriculture (2015), if a student's caregiver has a household annual income at or below the Income Eligibility Guidelines set forth by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), the student may be eligible for a free or subsidized cost meal and snack at school. The USDA uses the Federal poverty guidelines based on income and household size to make these determinations.

Professional Development. Guskey (2002) defines professional development programs as, "...systematic efforts to bring about change in the classroom practices of teachers, in their attitudes and beliefs, and in the learning outcomes of students" (p. 381). Professional development can be provided to teachers by the school, district, or an outside source.

Transformational Learning. A process of adult learning first studied by Jack Mezirow, a pioneer in adult learning. Referring to transformation theory Mezirow (2000) says the theory is, "...becoming critically aware of one's own tacit assumptions and expectations and those of others and assessing their relevance for making an interpretation" (p. 4).

Veteran Teacher. For the purpose of this study, I am defining a veteran teacher as a non-novice educator who has been teaching for more than five years.

Significance of Study

Our already overwhelmed teaching force faces yet another opportunity for which they may be unprepared: demographic shifts in the student populations of our schools. Unfortunately, the existing research offers little help for our veteran teachers and little professional development on these topics exists. As our country's demographics continue

to change, we cannot continue to operate our public schools as if we are teaching homogenous groups.

Although changing demographic student population may be seen as a challenge for our teaching force by many, it should be viewed positively as an opportunity for transformational growth and learning to occur. If we study those veteran teachers who have experienced these population changes and positive transformational learning has occurred, perhaps others can then learn from their stories and we can continue on a positive trend. Additionally, this study will fill a void in the literature pertaining to veteran teachers' perceptions about the shift in the demographic population changes in their classrooms.

Summary

The research is definitive that we are facing significant demographic student population changes in our schools. In the United States, we have students living in poverty and our English language learner population is growing as well, but we still teach as if we are instructing a homogenous group of students. In order to view this as a growth opportunity, we need a better understanding of how successful veteran teachers have navigated these situations and turned them into positive learning opportunities. Only then can we learn from these teachers' experiences and move in a positive direction.

The misnomer is that teachers and administrators need to change the students, or have them fit into some pre-existing mold which adheres to our own specific set of values. The research presented in this dissertation demonstrates that we, the teachers and administrators, need to change the way we think and teach instead of trying to change the students. As veteran teachers and administrators, we also need to have the professional

determination to engage one another in courageous or difficult conversations, which may challenge our beliefs and make us question why we do what we do in the classroom.

When we study veteran teachers who successfully navigate these new classroom population changes, we should find that those teachers' experiences were transformative in nature. Again, with these new demographic student population changes, the initial components are in place for teachers to participate in transformational learning experiences. These new demographic changes could be the opportunity Mezirow (1991) referred to for teachers to begin a transformational learning journey. In order to effectively engage and educate the changing demographic student populations, the research presented explains that we cannot just gloss the surface with new curriculum and a few programs. True change comes from deep reflection, group discussions, and strong, courageous leadership.

SECTION TWO:
PRACTITIONER SETTING

Introduction to the Practitioner Setting

The following section provides information about the school district and the site of this research study, including my unique perspective as a teacher and leader in this setting and my experiences with demographic change. Next, I provide details about the school and district's demographic population as well as an examination of the school's and district's leadership structure. This section also includes a closer look at how the administrator at the site of the research, who as a leader, fostered growth among her faculty. Finally, I explain the implications of conducting the study at the chosen school.

A Transformational Opportunity – My Personal Experience in this Setting

I started teaching in the Southeastern United States in the same city where I earned my undergraduate degree in education. The school district had a large percentage of English Language Learners (ELLs). Part of this phenomenon was attributed to the city being a large metropolitan area. During my student teaching and subsequent teaching career, I taught in schools with ELL populations that were even higher than district averages. Because this was the case, we had a very active and vocal ELL department. As a teacher, I enjoyed working with the ELL students for several reasons. My perspective was that the ELL students were excited to be at school, and their parents were very appreciative of the education I was providing for their children. ELL students went to schools in their neighborhoods, and I loved attending events in the community and building relationships with the students and their parents. I assumed all ELL students wanted to and were best served in their home schools. This was my truth. I worked in that district as a teacher and administrator for thirteen years.

In 2007, I moved to the Midwest. After multiple interviews and conversations with the local school district, I accepted a job as an administrator in a middle school. In one of those conversations I had with an assistant superintendent and the human resources director, I learned that the district used a cluster model for the ELL students. I was horrified as they described busing the students to specific schools, so they could all be together. This went against everything I learned as a student and as a practicing teacher. I felt like I was in a philosophical quandary, because this district also seemed to truly care about their students' success and the data supported the ELL students' success. I spent a lot of time reflecting on what I had learned. If they seemed to truly care about their students, maybe it was my duty to learn more about their approach. I engaged in several discussions with classroom and ELL teachers in my previous district and the new district. After these discussions, I began to understand the rationale for the cluster model. I also realized, that just because I had strong beliefs about what I thought was the proper way to educate students, did not mean that there were not equally valid means of accomplishing the same goals different from my own. Because of my experience, I had a strong desire to study how teachers respond to demographic changes. In this section of the research, I give further background and rationale for the settings for this study, especially about each school's organizational structure and leadership. The school and district names have been substituted with pseudonyms.

History of Organizations

The Middletown School District was located in a Midwest region of the United States. In addition to being centrally located in the state, the city of Middletown was also convenient to major metropolitan areas. In 2015, there were just over 17,000 students

enrolled in the Middletown School District. Of those 17,000 students, nearly 40% percent were non-white; 20% African American; 6% Hispanic; 5% Asian; 5% Multiracial.

Although Middletown's percentages were slightly different from the rest of this Midwestern state, the trends in demographic shifts were similar. The same demographic trends seen in Middletown were also visible in the western and southern regions of the United States (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2016). For example, since the year 2000, the total student population had continued to grow in Middletown. The district had seen decreases in the number of White students and increases in Hispanics and Asians, while the African-American population had remained relatively the same.

In the Middletown School District, the average years of teacher experience had been slightly over twelve since 2011. Since 2011, Middletown consistently had over 70% of its teaching force obtaining a Master's degree or higher. Those Middletown teachers were divided over multiple elementary schools, several middle schools, a few high schools, an alternative high school, a gifted education center, and a high school career center (State Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2016).

The Middletown school district had taken multiple steps to provide professional development to administrators and teachers with regard to teaching students of poverty. Beginning in 2014, the school district brought in speakers, sent teachers to conferences, conducted book studies, and offered professional development in order to gain an understanding of how to improve the success of its students of poverty. At the time of this study, the district administration made poverty research the main theme of its five year professional development plan for school improvement. For the purpose of this

study, I will focus on one school in the Middletown district with a unique set of circumstances.

Park School

The site for this study, within the Middletown district, was Park School. Park School was built in early 2000 to relieve overcrowding in two nearby schools. At the time of this study, Park was the largest elementary school in the Middletown District with over 600 students. Park School was centrally located within the school district and built very close to apartments used by many international graduate students at the local university. In the 2011-2012 school year, Park School became what the school district called an English Language Learner (ELL) cluster school. In an ELL cluster school, ELL students from around the district were bused to Park School, regardless of their attendance zone. Soon after, ELL students made up twenty percent of the student demographic population at Park School (Although this study focused on the demographic changes and experiences that occurred as Park School became an ELL cluster school, during the year of this study, 2016-2017, Park School lost the designation of an ELL cluster school. Middletown School District planned to revert back to their previous model and send all students to their home attendance area school. Future research should examine this transition for Park School, because it has had the reputation as a multicultural school which was evidenced by a frequently used global logo and an annual multicultural celebration day.)

Park School teachers' average years of experience exceeded the district's average. During the time of this study, the average Park School teacher had taught for over fourteen years, and over 72% of Park's teachers held advanced degrees. Over 28% of the students at Park School were served free and reduced priced lunches. According to 2015

state testing data, Park School had over fifty percent of the third, fourth, and fifth grade students scoring in the “proficient” or “advanced” achievement categories in English Language Arts and Mathematics testing.

Organizational Analysis

At the time of this study, most of the elementary and all of the middle schools in the Middletown district had an administrative staff consisting of an assistant principal and a principal. Each principal was responsible for the budget, personnel, insuring district curriculum was delivered by teachers, providing professional development opportunities for staff, and overseeing the day-to-day functions of their school. The assistant principal’s role could vary from school to school as the job duties were at the principal’s discretion. For instance, my role as assistant principal at Park School included teacher evaluation, student discipline, some professional development planning and delivery, and personnel. Each elementary, middle, and high school principal reported to an assistant superintendent at the district office for their respective level. Those assistant superintendents reported directly to the Middletown School District Superintendent, who then reported and was hired by the Middletown School Board. All employees of the Middletown School District were responsible for adhering to the Middletown School Board policies.

The structural framework of the Middletown School District represents a professional bureaucracy (Bolman & Deal, 2008), in which changes do not happen quickly, but teachers within the organization are assumed to be professionals and experts in their respective fields. Although this description of the school system’s straight-line hierarchy sounds similar to a scalar chain of command (Mintzberg, 1979) in the United

States Army, ideas in the school system can flow up and down as opposed to the Army's unidirectional idea flow.

Leadership Analysis

School leadership plays a crucial role in the professional growth of their teachers as well as providing opportunities for transformational learning. As discussed earlier, teacher transformational learning opportunities are extremely difficult without administrative support. If school administrators want to improve the success rate of their new demographic student populations by providing transformational learning opportunities for their teachers, then it is imperative that they reflect on their own leadership first.

In order to encourage teachers and set the scene for transformational growth among teaching staff, it is vital that school leaders take on an active supportive role in a teacher's growth and development. As will be explained in Section Three, school leadership cannot simply add resources, offer intermittent professional development, or make blanket demands and expect change. Since transformational learning requires deep reflection and dialogue, school leaders may reinterpret their role to that of a coach. They can then provide opportunities for professional development and discussion to promote understanding through dialogue in a supportive environment. Because support implies relationships, school leaders should approach these opportunities from a *Human Resource Frame* (Bolman & Deal, 2008) or perspective, which centers on relationships.

The Human Resource Frame has four core beliefs. First, organizations have the sole purpose to serve human needs. A school district's main purpose for existence is to educate and promote the success of all its students. Second, the role between people and

organizations is symbiotic. Teachers and administrators need a place to work and earn money and school districts need their ideas, talent, and commitment. When teachers are supported in meeting the needs of their students, the students are more apt to succeed and everyone involved wins. Third, when the relationship between a person or people and the organization is not good, either or both will suffer. Without administrative support, teacher efficacy and morale suffers making it difficult to support student progress and teacher growth. Finally, when a person and organization mesh well, everyone reaps the benefits (Bolman & Deal, 2008). Teachers who feel supported are more apt to safely question their practice and seek guidance in a nurturing environment which is necessary for transformational growth. These core beliefs demonstrate that the Human Resource Frame is about the relationship between the people and the organization. In the Human Resource Frame, Theory Y states that it is the job of leaders to foster the environment where individuals can achieve their goals and the organization can benefit (Bolman & Deal, 2008). The common goal is student success. Without administrative support through relationship building, providing professional development, providing opportunities for teacher reflection, and dialogue, a teacher's ability for transformational growth is greatly hampered.

An Example of a Leader Who Fosters Growth

At the time of this research, the principal at Park School was an excellent example of a leader who was committed to relationship building. As a seasoned administrator with years of experience, she had been the Park School principal for three years. She understood that in order to get the best performance from her teachers and help each attain their professional goals, she needed to build relationships and have an

understanding of each teacher's individual needs. Although there was a common goal of student success, everyone followed an individual path toward that end.

As a leader, she used the *Path-Goal* (Northouse, 2013) leadership approach. According to this model, the leader's job is to remove obstacles that stand in the way of the subordinate obtaining his or her goals (Northouse, 2013). The leader should also be able to change and match their own behavior or style to that which will best motivate the subordinate. For example, if a teacher lacks focus and direction, the principal could take a more directive approach. On the other hand, a teacher may need a supportive leader to match their behavior and help them realize their goals. In the Path-Goal approach, there are four behavior/styles which are directive, supportive, participative, and achievement-oriented. All of these behaviors require a solid understanding of the teachers' needs, which comes from close relationships.

At Park School (when I worked there), relationships were forged through daily interactions and one-on-one conversations about goals held each year by the principal with all staff. Additionally, the principal was an advocate for teachers to get whatever they needed, whether it was resources or professional development, in order for them to reach their goals. This example is just one approach to creating an environment conducive to transformational learning among teachers.

Implications

Park School had undergone a significant demographic student population shift. Once a predominantly homogenous student body, the school had become an English Language Learner (ELL) cluster school. As described earlier, in a cluster model, ELL students are bused from their home school to a central district school in order to

consolidate resources. The school went from having a small ELL population to having twenty percent of its students considered English Language Learners. At the time of the study, Park School had over 150 of their 750 students being served by two ELL teachers. Park School considered this new diverse group of students a positive opportunity, as they believed it added to the richness of their community. This study allowed me to better understand if the teachers at Park School had changed the way they taught as a result of the shift in population. I was interested to find out if the teachers had true transformational experiences as a result of working with a new diverse population of students.

Summary

This section provided some additional background information about the research setting, and explained why the specific site was chosen for this study. I acknowledged that I was part of the organizational structure of the Middletown School District. Because of this unique researcher status, there was a possibility of gaining additional insights from teachers who may have felt that they were more than merely participants. Even with my former administrative status among the teachers, I believe that my personal strengths with empathy and the ability to build relationships added to the teachers' desire to support me with this research. Finally, this section gave examples of leadership skills necessary for administrators to foster transformational learning opportunities for their teachers. The primary goal for administrators and school leaders is to create supportive environments for students and teachers that invite reflection and dialogue in order to question why we do what we do.

SECTION THREE:
SCHOLARLY REVIEW

Conceptual Framework

This study will examine the experience of teachers whose school has undergone demographic change, and whether teachers at that school adapted or changed their craft and their thinking. The next section first defines and then gives some background on Mezirow's theory of transformational learning. This section also includes research on the factors and contexts that lead to teachers' transformational learning. The literature review begins by examining how school districts use professional development and policy to address demographic change. The review concludes with an exploration of teachers' responses to demographic change, their views on professional development, and a possible direction for professional development.

Transformational Learning

Transformational learning is a type of learning accomplished specifically by adults (Merriam & Bierema, 2014; Mezirow, 1991). In order to help understand why transformational learning is an adult process, and why this distinction is relevant to this study, it is helpful to differentiate between learning as a child and learning as an adult. Merriam and Bierema (2014) shared three ways in which adult learning differs from the learning of a child. First, children and adults are at different stages in life. For the most part, children are dependent on others to help them, while adults are more independent. While a child's primary role is to go to school (in most U.S. contexts), an adult may have multiple roles such as employee, parent, and citizen.

A second way to differentiate between the two types of learning is that a child's academic learning may take place predominantly in school, while an adult may learn through the variety of experiences they participate within the various roles discussed

above. Finally, adults and children are at different learning stages developmentally. Adults learn through using more advanced social interactions and cognition involving metaphors, reflection, and critical discourse (Merriam & Bierema, 2014). These differentiations in learning styles underscore Mezirow's theories about transformative learning. In order to better understand the connection between transformative learning and experience, reflection, and critical discourse, it is important to see how these ideas fit into the broader picture of intentional or purposeful adult learning.

Background of transformational learning. To explain intentional adult learning, within the framework of transformational learning, Mezirow (2000) drew from the work of the German social theorist, Jurgen Habermas, who examined transformation theory through a sociolinguistic lens. Specifically, Habermas delineated between "instrumental" and "communicative" domains of intentional learning (Mezirow, 2000). In the communicative domain, the learner gains information through "critical discourse" in which the learner must be able to explain one's self and understand others. In contrast, with instrumental learning, the learner takes a new situation, contemplates his or her reaction and possible outcomes, and makes an assessment based on what actually happens. It is the interaction between the two domains, instrumental and communicative, which precipitates transformational learning (Mezirow, 2000).

In the instrumental domain, adults hypothesize about how situations could be made better or worse depending on a chosen course of action. That is, we make predictions on how possible outcomes, which may be right or wrong, will affect a current situation or event. However, in the communicative domain, learning involves the use of metaphors, language, and experience to understand others and explain ourselves.

Mezirow (1991) wrote, “Most significant learning in adulthood falls into this [communicative] category because it involves understanding, describing, and explaining intentions; values; ideals; moral issues; social, political, philosophical, psychological, or educational concepts; feelings and reasons” (p. 75). To simplify the two domains of intentional learning, instrumental learning pertains to controlling a situation, and in communicative learning we try to understand a situation. The following paragraphs describe the important components that constitute the control and understanding that lead to transformational learning: experience, reflection, and disequilibrium.

Experience. As adults, when we try to understand a situation, we rely on our past experiences and the values and social norms we have been exposed to throughout our lives (Mezirow, 1991). One way we accomplish this reliance is through the use of metaphors. Mezirow (1991) stated, “We compare incidents, key concepts, or words and relate them to our meaning schemes. Often understanding comes from finding the right metaphor to fit the experience analogically into our meaning schemes, theories, belief systems, or self-concept” (p. 80). In his book, *The Reflective Practitioner: How Professionals Think in Action*, Donald Schön (1983) also referred to metaphors in order to explain how the learner tries to make sense or understand when he or she is confronted with a new situation. Schön (1983) wrote, “...to see the unfamiliar, unique situation as both similar to and different from the familiar one, without at first being able to say similar or different with respect to what. The familiar situation functions as a precedent, or metaphor...” (138). As adult learners, we draw on these metaphors to understand situations, but each one of us has unique experiences, values, and social norms that make interpretations very individual.

Reflection. Whether the learner hypothesizes, uses metaphors, or experiences as a method of understanding a new learning situation, the need for reflection is crucial.

Mezirow (1991) stated, “Intentional learning centrally involves either the explication of the meaning of an experience, reinterpretation of that meaning, or the application of it in thoughtful action” (p. 99). Mezirow (1991) explained that the key component to all intentional learning is reflection, which may then lead to transformative learning.

Theories of transformative learning also draw from American philosopher, John Dewey’s, definition of reflective thought which Dewey called *critical inquiry*. Specifically, Dewey said reflective thought is, “active, persistent and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds that support it and the further conclusion to which it tends” (Dewey, 1910, p. 6). In other words, it is only through reflection that, “...enlightened action and reinterpretation [are] possible, and especially for the crucial role that reflection plays in validating what has been learned” (Mezirow, 1991, p. 100).

There are three types of reflection according to Mezirow, of which only one type leads to true transformative learning: “*Content reflection* is thinking about the actual experience itself; *process reflection* is thinking about how to handle the experience; and *premise reflection* involves examining long-held socially constructed assumptions, beliefs and values about the experience or problem” (Mezirow, 1991, p. 62). It is through premise reflection that the adult learner uses metaphors and extends meaning to a current situation. Premise reflection or deep introspective questioning forces individuals to challenge their beliefs which is absolutely necessary in moving along the process toward transformational learning. Other researchers have also discussed this deeper reflection

necessary for transformational learning. For example, Donald Schön (1983) claimed that “reflective practice” was necessary for growth and transformation: people need to reflect on their daily practice and question why they do what they do and make changes accordingly.

In addition, premise reflection is not achieved through deep self-reflection alone and is often difficult to achieve. In order for individuals to understand different perspectives, there must be rational or critical discourse (Mezirow, 1991). In other words, individuals must be willing to listen to ideas that are different from their own in order to reflect and transform. Additionally, Merriam (2004) argued that in order to achieve transformational learning, the learner must be at a certain cognitive level, and that is challenging: studies show, however, “...many adults do not operate at higher levels of cognitive functioning” (p. 63). In turn, certain levels of maturity and education may be necessary prerequisites for “rational discourse,” which then leads to “premise reflection.”

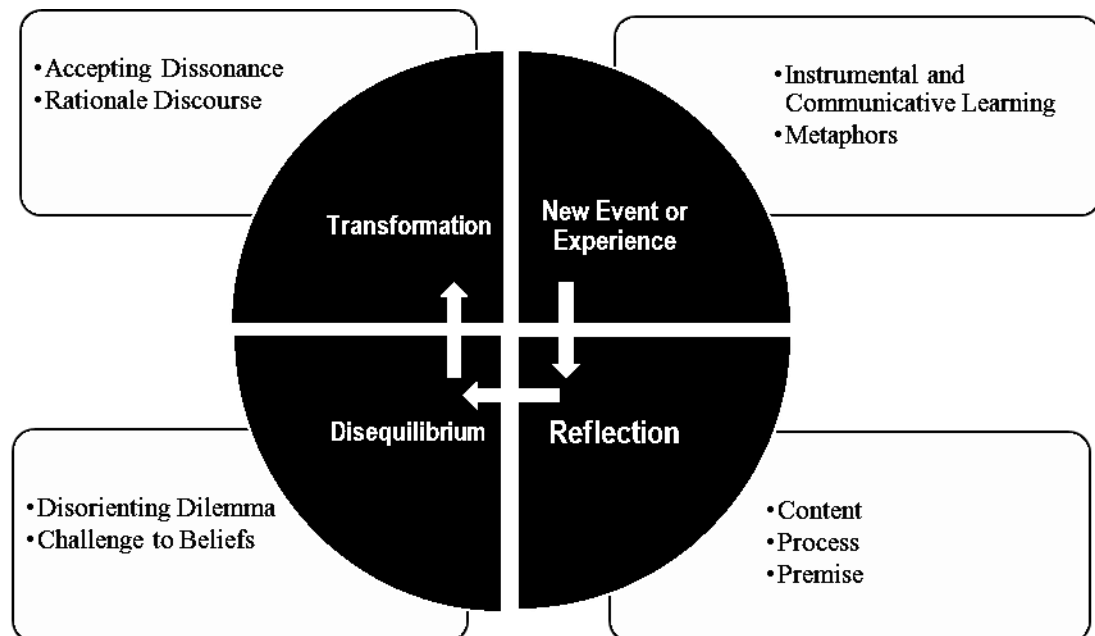
Disequilibrium. As one engages in premise reflection or reflects on their own experience, they may undergo a “disequilibrium” (Keegan, 1982), or a disorienting dilemma (Mezirow, 2000) in which the learner is confronted with a situation that is not explained by what is already known. In turn, that disequilibrium or challenge to one’s belief system can bring about transformational learning. Mezirow claimed that learners may have specific views of the world prior to a transformational learning experience, and they may not be aware that there are other views with just as much credibility.

Discovering through reflection that there are other perspectives and views, which are just as important as one’s own, would cause a disequilibrium possibly leading to a change in beliefs and transformational learning.

In summary, adults encounter new learning through a wide range of **experiences**. Adults compare new situations to what they've previously experienced at which point, adult learners either respond quickly, or they **reflect** and process this new information. If the adult reflects on the new information and finds that it does not fit into what he or she knows to be true, a dissonance or **disequilibrium** occurs. When the adult is willing to accept this dissonance or challenge to their beliefs through reflection and participation in rational discourse, he or she may be on the path to **transformation**. Figure 3 is my own interpretation demonstrating the intersections of these components, which can lead to transformational learning.

Figure 3

Concept Map for Transformational Learning Theory



Research on Transformational Learning and Teaching

Mezirow's theory on transformational learning holds that one's reflections on previously held assumptions and experiences in light of new learning or situations creates discomfort and challenges those existing views, causing one to change his or her perspective. This dissertation argues that when teachers encounter a significant demographic student population shift, (i.e., a "new experience") and find beliefs different from their own causing a disequilibrium, teachers may have a transformational learning experience. The present teaching force in the U.S. is predominantly white and may have little experience with demographic groups outside of their own (Cochran-Smith & Zeichner, 2009), making a demographic shift something new. If combined with premise reflection and rational discourse, demographic change as a unique or new situation could set the stage for transformational learning to occur. Specifically, if teachers have not yet had experiences with the new demographic groups in the classroom, and they are willing to accept other world views, the opportunity is ripe for transformational learning to occur. They may experience a "disequilibrium" as Kegan (1982) and Mezirow (2000) discussed, as they encounter new world views or beliefs and become aware that there are other perspectives in addition to their own. They may come to understand that the students they instruct each may bring different cultural, racial, religious, or other perspectives to the classroom that may impact those students best chance for success in unexpected ways. If teachers go beyond the new experience into reflection then discourse about their relationships and work in the classroom, transformational learning may occur to the benefit of both teacher and student.

A small body of research has tested the transformational learning theory in schools. One such study in secondary schools suggested that transformational learning is possible, but it takes more than rational discourse and premise reflection in order for teachers to be capable of the deeper reflection needed for a transformational learning experience (Runhaar, Sanders, & Yang, 2010). This research found a strong connection between “occupational self-efficacy” (the confidence teachers have in their profession) with reflection and feedback. The authors summarized their findings as follows:

This means that the more teachers believe that they can cope with difficulties they encounter in their work, the more they reflect and ask colleagues, students or their managers for feedback. Second, we also detected positive effects of learning goal orientation on reflection and sharing feedback, which suggests that when teachers’ goal [sic] is set to improve their competencies and to complete new and more complex tasks, they are more willing to engage in learning activities of reflection and asking feedback. (p. 1159)

Using these findings, Runhaar et al. (2010) added “occupational self-efficacy” and feedback to Mezirow’s “rational discourse” and “premise reflection.”

In another study about transformational learning, teachers experienced a disorienting dilemma when multiple stakeholders expected them to incorporate technology into their classrooms (King, 2002). King’s study (2002) examined how an understanding of transformational learning theory could be used to design professional development opportunities for teachers with regard to new educational technology. The professional development included a university course and incorporated ideas to help foster transformational learning through discussion groups, small-group projects,

journaling, and opportunities for reflection. After the professional development course, King (2002) found that 89.1% of the 175 participants had transformational experiences with regard to educational technology. Additionally, with these transformational experiences the teachers' self-confidence or self-efficacy increased.

One could extrapolate from these findings to predict how teachers experiencing new student populations may respond and what they may need to be successful. Assume a teacher presented with a significant demographic change in their classroom, as the starting point is open to new ideas and the idea of change. Consider Mezirow's unique situation and the opportunity for content and process reflection. If we take Mezirow's theoretical work about transformational learning and further consider previous research findings (e.g., King, 2002; Runhaar, Sanders & Yang, 2010) about what teachers specifically need in order to have a successful transformational learning experience, we may be able to support the school district's efforts to maximize students' opportunities.

Current Status of Literature

School districts across the country are facing three major demographic shifts: "rising poverty, the growing number of students from immigrant families, and increasing populations of students of color" (Turner, 2015, p. 4). What were once white and middle-class suburbs are now occupied by mostly underrepresented minority and immigrant families (Frey, 2011; Holme, Diem, & Welton, 2014). Unfortunately, there is limited research on how school districts and educators are responding to this demographic change and that uncertain response may impact student achievement. In addition, there is little guidance for the school leaders who desire to offer professional development to teachers, especially around issues concerning demographic change due to immigration.

Even for the teachers interested in their own growth, it may be difficult to find information to help them respond to changing student populations.

It is apparent that significant demographic change in American public schools is impacting our educational system (Evans, 2007; Holme et al., 2014; Miller & Martin, 2015; Turner, 2015). So, what are we doing, if anything, to prepare for and ensure a quality education for these new faces in our classrooms? The following sections first explore research that examines how school districts and school leadership respond to changing demographics through professional development and policy. The next subsections then explore how veteran teachers are thinking about their changing student populations, and the kind of professional development that they would prefer. Overall, the literature suggests that our school system and educators must prepare teachers for their diverse students, otherwise those students will suffer academically. In addition, while research suggests a connection between positive student-teacher relationships and academic success (Klem & Connell, 2004; Pianta, Hamre, & Allen, 2012), too few veteran teachers receive training or professional development in this area.

Districts Responses to Changing Demographics: Professional Development

Although there is limited research available, we know there are professional development opportunities designed to help teachers respond to changes in student populations, especially surrounding students' socioeconomic status. When educators are asked to think of nationwide comprehensive professional development efforts focused on teaching new demographics like students from impoverished backgrounds, Ruby Payne's name comes to mind. Payne is a writer, speaker, and educator who founded the company "aha! Process," which trains educators and puts out material designed to educate people

about poverty. As of 2016, her website claimed she has trained hundreds of thousands of teachers in every state, and in ten countries outside the United States (aha! Process, 2016).

However, as widespread as Ruby Payne's message is received, many critics take issue with her ideas (Bomer, Dworin, May, & Semingson, 2008; Gorski, 2008). In short, the opposition has claimed that Payne's teachings actually promote deficit thinking. Bomer et al. (2008) stated that it seems, "...her 'framework' included negative stereotypes that drew from a longstanding US tradition of viewing the poor from a deficit perspective" (p. 2500). This means that Payne's teachings actually lead teachers to misunderstand and believe misinformation about students in poverty. Bomer et al. (2008) asserted that poverty is a material condition, but Payne's work suggests that poverty is due to individual or cultural deficits. Additionally, in Payne's case studies, the majority of people are African American, which Bomer et al. (2008) say "...racializes the representation of poverty" (p. 2506).

As an authority figure, many teachers have listened to what Payne has told them to believe about students in poverty without question. However, if what Payne's detractors are saying is true, the message she sends out actually makes it harder for teachers to experience transformational learning opportunities. Her message may fortify rather than challenge the stereotypes that teachers have about students living in poverty, thereby negating reflection and discourse. As mentioned earlier in this section, we all have learned values and social norms that we bring to all of our experiences (Mezirow, 2008). If one of the few but most comprehensive efforts to provide professional development to teachers who work with students of a different demographic population,

encourages stereotypical thinking, are districts' professional development truly helping teachers?

Additionally, while school districts have found prominent professional development for learning about students of poverty, it is difficult to find the same kind of national, widespread professional development program focused on demographic change caused by immigration. In my experience as a teacher and school leader, district-wide professional development typically brings in speakers like Ruby Payne. Less often have we had opportunities to learn about immigrants, refugees, and other new representations in student populations, although some resources do exist online (e.g. www.EducationWorld.com). A teacher seeking help may turn to the internet or an English Language Learner (ELL) teacher (less than 1% of public school teachers are ELL instructors) for answers (Face the Facts USA, 2015), but even those resources are scarce.

There have been, however, small-scale, district-led training on working with students from immigrant families and ELLs. One research study worked with a district that had an influx of immigrant and refugee students and examined how they chose to respond through professional development (Karabenick & Noda, 2004). The researchers used surveys to ask teachers their beliefs and attitudes about ELL students in order to determine a path for the implementation of teacher training. They learned the teachers were generally favorable about having the new students in their classrooms (Karabenick & Noda, 2004). Other studies have also found teachers welcoming of ELL students (Gándara, Maxwell-Jolly, & Driscoll, 2005; Reeves, 2006). However, at the same time, research also demonstrates a lack of teaching confidence with ELL students and a lack of knowledge about second language acquisition or teaching ELL students in general

(Gándara, Maxwell-Jolly, & Driscoll, 2005; Garcia, et al., 2010; Ray & Bowman, 2003). In some cases, researchers have been able to use this information along with the teachers' beliefs and attitudes about ELL students to help districts design professional development programs (Karabenick & Noda, 2004). In this case, the district acknowledged the teachers' shortcomings and were able to provide the appropriate support.

Thus, extant research and professional development programming suggest that districts must acknowledge issues such as poverty, immigration, and culture. The next subsection will address what happens when districts use policy to address demographic changes.

District Responses to Changing Demographics: Policy

A small body of research has started to examine what happens when school districts use policy to respond to new student populations. This subsection will explain how the influence of community stakeholders can guide a school district's educational decisions, and how limited responses to diversity issues have not maximized student success.

For example, one qualitative case study in Texas examined a school district's response to significant and quick demographic student population change by examining how a "zone of mediation" functioned there (Holme, Diem, & Welton, 2014). A "zone of mediation" is the guideline or structure that shapes how school districts formally or informally address situations (Oakes, 1992). Specific groups have an impact on a school district's "zone of mediation," and they may look different depending on the district or the situation. For example, school districts may be influenced by businesses, legislators, and community members. In turn, "Viewing schools as mediating institutions can help

better explain why the adoption and implementation of reforms that seek to improve outcomes for traditionally marginalized populations can be so difficult, because such reforms often run up against existing dynamics of power” (Holme et al., 2014, p. 39). In short, even well-intentioned schools and faculty are sometimes up against powerful politics.

Through an examination of qualitative interviews with employees and other participants who were familiar with the district’s policies and practices, Holme et al. (2014) learned that the district paid careful attention to “technical changes in curriculum and instruction” as they responded to demographic changes, but they did not address normative and political relationships. In other words, the school districts made efforts to improve instruction for students through offering new curricula, but it appeared that they did little to foster transformative growth in the teachers, who continued to hold the same beliefs about the new populations. Many administrative personnel thought the improved curricula were sufficient to address the demographic changes (Holme, Diem, & Welton, 2014).

Furthermore, while the school districts provided diversity training for educators, not all personnel were able to participate in the sessions. Finally, the district also suggested redrawing boundary lines to accommodate growth and further integrate the schools, but elite community members voiced their disapproval (Holme, Diem, & Welton, 2014). Other studies (Dorner, 2011) similarly found that when policies addressing new immigrant populations are proposed at the district level, the public, political response may make it difficult for educators to move beyond technical (curricular) changes, as they run into normative belief systems not aligned with the

majority. The proposed changes in this district (for a new bilingual education program) went beyond the (White, middle-class) public's "zone of tolerance" (Boyd, 1976). In turn, such political circumstances at the district level may hinder opportunities for teachers' transformational learning from significant demographic change in student populations.

The preceding subsections have addressed demographic change at a district level, but where are teachers in their thinking about student diversity? The following subsections will discuss how teachers personally respond to demographic change and, in turn, how school leaders could best help them transform and grow.

Teachers' Responses to Changing Demographics

Another body of work has examined in-service teachers' responses to demographic change, highlighting the importance of race and ethnicity in teachers' beliefs and behaviors. As mentioned earlier, the teaching force in the U.S. is predominantly white and female. We also know that after college, teachers typically want to teach in schools that were similar to the ones they attended (Ladson-Billings, 2011; Hollins & Guzman, 2005; Paine, 1990). Without an understanding or proper professional development about diverse student populations, some teachers use their own background and beliefs to make meaning of their encounters with their new students.

Researchers have found that faculty used their own beliefs about students and families of diverse backgrounds to guide their decision making as instructors. In a study of three high schools in multiple states, researchers found that teachers felt African American students could not perform like their White counterparts (Evans, 2007). The teachers believed that their school's test scores would drop as a result of the new

population of African American students. Additionally, the teachers claimed stricter behavior management needed to be enforced during the shift in demographics to a higher population of African American students (Evans, 2007). The study also showed that the faculty's interactions with African American students suffered because of the negative feelings and beliefs teachers held. However, in one school in the district where they held the same view of African American students' ability, the teachers and administration felt some responsibility for making improvements in their teaching. Even though the staff wanted to change, and they did make some inconsistent efforts, in the end it proved unsuccessful for the new population.

Teachers applying their own belief systems to new groups of students is not strictly an issue in the U.S. In one Austrian study, teachers who were teaching homogenous classes, had an influx of Muslim refugees (Santoro & Forghani-Arani, 2014). In this study, the teachers forced Muslim girls to participate in a mandatory swimming class. One reluctant girl was wearing two shirts as her culture valued body modesty. Her teacher told her to remove one shirt and assured her that she did not have to tell anyone. In this case, the teacher knew the girl's parents would not approve and also sent the message and made the assumption that the girl's culture was too strict (Santoro & Forghani-Arani, 2014).

In Prague, research found that migrant children were pushed to quickly assimilate into Czech culture by an immediate effort to learn the Czech language (Machovcová, 2017). Interviews revealed that teachers believed if students could speak the dominant language it would remove their "difference" and help assimilate them into Czech society.

Instead of adapting to new demographics, educators may keep trying to assimilate other cultures into their own. Schools are organizations that are resistant to change (Portes & Smagorinsky, 2010). Educators may force minority students to adapt to the primarily White predominant culture of those teaching in our schools. “The majority group member [teacher] may choose to respond to those undergoing adaptation in defensive or welcoming ways” (Portes & Smagorinsky, 2010, p. 238). When educators try to enculturate students into the predominant white culture in schools, they can devalue students’ languages and backgrounds. When schools do not support students’ first language or cultural identities, they devalue students themselves (Valenzuela, 1999).

So, we know what is not working: inadequate professional development, poorly implemented policies, challenging school district politics, and teachers applying prior, perhaps discriminatory beliefs to make decisions for students. At the same time, we know that our current teaching force has a background dissimilar to many of the students they teach, so we also know we need to educate teachers. What can we learn from our successful veteran teachers that we can use to help all teachers grow and transform, particularly when they experience demographic change?

Veteran Teachers’ Responses to Professional Development

It is my experience as a school administrator that teachers want to be successful, but they do not want to waste time with professional development that does not directly apply to them and their current students. What teachers want are real ideas which they can immediately put into practice and glean results (Guskey, 2002; Matherson & Windle, 2017). Most professional development for teachers is designed to change their beliefs and attitudes in order to achieve teacher growth and student success. However, Guskey

(2002) suggests that thinking should be reversed. If we want to make a significant change in teacher beliefs and attitudes, they need to see results first. In other words, what changes a teacher's beliefs and attitudes is not the professional development as a whole, but rather an implemented strategy which proves effective based on his or her students' success. Therefore, if we rethink the way we offer professional development with these considerations in mind, we can help teachers grow and transform.

Teachers willing to change will seek out strategies to help their students find success. Interestingly, in a study about professional development, a researcher determined that teachers came to professional development with their own agendas (Liljedahl, 2014). In other words, the teachers who attended the professional development each wanted a specific outcome from the sessions. The researcher found that the professional development was ineffective for those attending who were disinterested or resistant to change, but the sessions were beneficial for those who were open to change.

Another researcher found that veteran teachers drew on their previous experience, while the new teachers referred to literature (Thomas, 2007). However, neither group felt adequately prepared for working with diverse students. None of the teachers could provide examples of specific professional development focused on multicultural education. The professional development sessions they did note were related to gifted education, poverty, and different learning styles. Veteran teachers assumed if an issue was important, their districts would provide necessary training. If there was not a clear plan from leadership, teachers had to make assumptions about leadership's intent (Thomas, 2007).

Guskey (2002) claimed that if we want to see teachers change their beliefs and practices, teachers need to see their students succeed based on the implementation of specific strategies. If we add Liljedahl's (2014) idea that teachers come to professional development seeking specific information they can use, we can make the following assumption. Our professional development offerings should provide useful techniques that guide teachers to transform while he or she is working with a classroom demographic that is changing rapidly. Otherwise, they may remain stuck in the metaphors of their own experience which may not serve the needs of their new students.

Summary

The research reviewed in this dissertation discusses well-meaning attempts to remedy the situation our teaching force faces when addressing the needs of diverse populations. In these articles, it appears that many of the current professional development opportunities are missing the mark. Our schools either offer topics that do not match the needs of our students, or we provide limited attempts at courses designed with diverse students in mind, but lacking in the supports to put ideas into practice.

Other research reviewed in this section show school districts' limited solutions to meeting the needs of diverse students. In Holme et al. (2014), school districts thought providing extra resources or having non-mandatory diversity training was a solution. Evans' (2007) study found teachers had the view that minority students were "less capable" than their white counterparts. Studies in the U.S. and abroad found schools encouraged the assimilation of minority students into the majority culture (Machovcová, 2017; Santoro & Forghani-Arani, 2014; Valenzuela, 1999). Until there is concerted effort to move teachers from the metaphors of their own experience to reflection and discourse,

they will not transform and we will fail our minority students. Portes and Smagorinsky (2010) conclude with advice for teacher education programs, "...incorporate issues relevant to questioning norms into their teacher education programs so that teacher candidates will be encouraged to reflect on issues of normative differences in thinking about how to teach their students with the greatest effectiveness" (p. 244). Additionally, Thomas' (2007) research shows that veteran teachers and administrators should challenge their views and ask themselves why we teach the way we teach in order to move forward.

We know we are facing significant demographic student population changes in our schools. We also know that attempts to change their students, or have them fit into some preexisting mold that adheres to traditional White-European values has not worked. The research reviewed shows that we, the teachers, administrators, and boards of education need instead consider that "difference is seen as a resource, not as a threat" (Flores & Benmayor, 1997, p. 5). Additionally, we need to provide resources to engage in courageous professional development that may challenge beliefs and make us question why we do what we do in the classroom. In order to effectively engage and educate the changing demographic student populations, the research indicates that a new curriculum and a few programs will not suffice. We need to take a fresh look at the way we offer professional development for teachers. Synthesizing an understanding of transformational learning theory (Mezirow, 1991), coupled with the addition of teacher self-efficacy (Runhaar, Sanders, & Yang, 2010) and what we know teachers want from professional development (Guskey, 2002) offers a new type of assistance that may work. True transformative growth and change comes from deep reflection, group discourse,

supportive relationships that calibrate disequilibrium, strong, courageous leadership, and ultimately, transformation.

SECTION FOUR:
CONTRIBUTION TO SCHOLARSHIP

Introduction to Findings

The population of our schools is changing. In this study, situated at Park School that had recently undergone demographic changes, I set out to see how or whether teachers responded to a changing student demographic population. Primarily, I wanted to examine how veteran teachers respond to such changes, asking: What are the veteran teachers' beliefs and practices as they interact with students who differ from the ones they have always taught? Specifically, do veteran teachers continue with similar (1) beliefs about students, (2) pedagogical approaches, and (3) ways of interacting with family members? Or do teachers develop new ideas and approaches, perhaps viewing the changes as an opportunity for growth or a transformational learning experience? As I analyzed the data, I thought that I would mostly learn about how teachers changed their instruction, but instead I found that veteran teachers' responses expressed a stronger desire *to build individual relationships* with their new students. In addition, while the Park School veteran teachers did not talk about changing their teaching practices based on populations in general, they did report making changes in their teaching practice after getting to know their students as individuals. For nine of these teachers, these strong relationships with students (and other teachers) seemed to lead to transformational learning experiences.

In the remainder of this chapter, I will briefly review my methods and then share four main findings: (1) the term diversity took on different meanings for different people at Park School, and therefore as a word does not dictate a specific response, (2) relationships with individual students took precedence over school ability and need to be in place prior to determining academic agendas, (3) when long-held teacher assumptions

were challenged, a change in teaching practice could take place and, (4) veteran teachers maintained a pedagogical toolbox that they could tailor to an individual student's needs. Throughout the analysis, I will refer back to my original research questions and compare what I found relative to transformational learning theory. Lastly, I will explain the implications of this research and some possible next steps.

A Review of Methods, Data Collection, and Analysis

I sent an initial questionnaire to all 38 teachers at Park School, but only six teachers completed the survey. One of the six people completing the initial questionnaire was a second-year teacher and the other five were all veteran teachers. Following the questionnaire, I was able to find and interview 17 veteran teachers who were teaching students who differed from those they taught earlier in their career. It is important to note, that while the veteran teachers' teaching experience ranged from 7 years to 35 years of total teaching, there was little difference in the responses based on those years of experience. After the initial interviews, I chose four of those 17 teachers and completed follow-up interviews. (see Table 4).

After reviewing the questionnaire results and interviewing these teachers, the answer to the broader question of how do veteran teachers respond to demographic change became more complicated than originally anticipated. As I coded the interview and questionnaire transcripts, the key themes I noticed were less about changing teaching practice based on different groups of students, and more about changes based on individual students. Additionally, the Park School teachers I interviewed had different ideas about the term diversity. However, just over half of the teachers I interviewed

responded to demographic change by changing their beliefs and practices, their pedagogical approaches, and/or their interactions with families.

Defining a “Demographic Change” at Park School

Diversity as Positive Multicultural Change

Eighteen of the 23 teachers in this study acknowledged changes of an increase in English Language Learners at Park School. Thirteen teachers also mentioned changes in the socioeconomic level of their students. Those teachers noted the growing populations of lower-socioeconomic level and “non-traditional” (single parent) families at Park School. When asked about their perception of the student body, one respondent said, “I love the diversity and the uniqueness that our students bring” (Teacher A, questionnaire, October 24, 2016). This sentiment was echoed throughout the interviews. In fact, two teachers brought their own children to Park for the multicultural experience. One of those teachers said, “When I think of my own child and how I want his experiences to be in school so that he's best prepared for having a job in a multicultural world” (Teacher C2, follow-up interview, February 8, 2017). Another teacher said, “My perception is that it is good for the student body to have a large mix of cultures and races. I have taught in a school where this wasn't the case and I feel that tolerance for others is better here” (Teacher C, questionnaire, October 24, 2016).

Because educators throughout the district and a majority of study participants referred to Park School as a multicultural school, I used the follow-up interviews to ask more specifically what teachers associated with that label. The three teachers each said that multicultural school means that they celebrate the students' different backgrounds, customs, religions and cultures. Explaining how being a multicultural school is positive,

one teacher continued, “The Caucasian Park students aren’t blown away, are not puzzled...when somebody who looks different from them comes into the classroom” (Teacher B7, follow-up interview, February 8, 2017). This comment came from an African-American teacher who had taught in other schools where the population was homogenous and anyone different would have stood out. In addition, this teacher had been singled out as a student because of her race during her childhood; she seemed to appreciate the students’ lack of surprise in response to different racial/ethnic groups.

On the other hand, while cultural diversity was portrayed as positive across participants, other types of diversity such as academic, behavioral, and socioeconomic were viewed as challenging. While teachers used positive words to describe the ELL population of Park School, the word “challenging” came up when describing other populations of students, as shown in the next section.

Diversity as Challenging Changes

Despite the positive perspectives about multiculturalism in general, demographic change and the term “diversity” took on a variety of meanings. Table 5 below shows teachers’ responses who specifically mentioned the word “diversity” as it related to Park School during my interviews or on the questionnaire. While teachers acknowledged an increase in ELL students, they also talked about students’ diverse academic abilities and different kinds of “social” skills.

Table 5

Defining Diversity at Park School

Teacher	When describing student population at Park School, teachers specifically used term “Diverse” or “Diversity” to separate students by...
A1	Academic – “You know academically it’s definitely a challenge this year. I would say that I have eight students that are reading below fifth grade expectation, so that academic piece has been a struggle.”
A2	Age/Ethnicity- “This group in particular is split in terms of I have – the majority of my class is very young for kindergarten.” “And definitely some ELL students, but not all are getting served through ELL. It’s, you know, I like the diversity that we have and other parents have come and it’s like the United Nations.”
B5	Ethnicity/Socioeconomic- “I have a diverse class as always, people from a variety of ethnic and socioeconomic status.”
B1	Poverty- “I think we’ve got a wonderful diverse group of kids. Now I do know we are getting more and more poverty I think, and more broken families.
B7	Class- “...a good diverse group that I haven’t seen in a little while. I have some students who are very, very middle class. I have a few that are a little above middle class.”
A	Class- “We have more students in low socio-economic status, a shrinking middle class and a top higher income bracket that I think has not changed much.”
B	Ethnicity/Behavioral- “I see it [Park School student population] as an ever-changing body of students from a large variety of ethnic groups.”
C	Cultural/Racial- “A large group of English language learners, approx. 20% including refugees, students from Korea who are here with parents that teach at the university. Several levels of economic placement of income and a large mix of black, white and multiracial families.”
D	Background/Home Life- “We have many ELL students from many different backgrounds. We also have high income and low income families. It’s very diverse. We have many different languages that are spoken but also students from many different backgrounds and home life.”

Teacher	When describing student population at Park School, teachers specifically used term “Diverse” or “Diversity” to separate students by...
E	ELL/Behavioral- “We have a diverse population with many students who receive ELL services. In addition, we also seem to have more challenges with student behavior this year than we have had over the last five years.”
F	Culture/Ethnicity/Linguistic- “...there is certainly an increase in more culturally-, ethnically-, and linguistically-diverse populations in public schools across the United States.”

First, all the teachers acknowledged an increase in the number of ELL students over time at Park School, but the term “diversity” did not always refer to that ELL population. The data suggest that teachers’ idea of a diverse student population may change year-to-year, depending upon the student make-up in their own particular classroom. It might also signal an unwillingness to speak in depth about diversity by race or ethnicity, with teachers just as likely to mention students’ academic ability levels in their conversations about diversity. For example, one teacher told me the following when asked to describe her current classroom:

There are 21 students. I have several ELL students. I have got a very high group of math students, which is not typical that I have seen. I mean higher than I have had in years. I have one student that’s an extreme challenge. I have one student that has a parent that comes with him every day. (Teacher B3, interview, November 17, 2017)

As teachers described their current classrooms, they alluded to more differences in class makeup than in previous years. One teacher remarked, “Our population’s changed this year. We got a lot of [another school’s] students, so of my twenty three students, ten are not [Park] students” (Teacher B2, interview, November 17, 2016). These differences

included socioeconomic status, academic ability, family structure, and students receiving special education services. However, perhaps because of a focus on their current classroom context, many teachers seemed to quickly pass over what the district (and I) saw as the most significant demographic shift: the increase in ELLs in their classroom. For instance, the quote from Teacher B3 above only devoted one quick sentence to the change in ELL population before moving to explain the diverse academic abilities and “challenging” behavior in her classroom.

Second, while discussing diversity, several teachers mentioned concerns about a recent shift as the district borders were redrawn and students from one apartment complex were re-zoned to attend Park School. Some teachers described these new students as “challenging” with regard to behavior, like teacher B3 earlier. Because of the ways that teachers responded, I usually inferred that these were “challenging” students from a lower socioeconomic background, and that this shift was not as welcome as cultural diversity. For example, referring to the influx of re-zoned students from a lower socioeconomic background, one teacher said, “...some of those students are becoming very challenging and came with issues from other schools” (Teacher B2, interview, November 17, 2016).

Because of this variety of perspectives in the initial 17 interviews, I conducted three follow-up interviews with the veteran teachers at Park School. In these conversations, I specifically asked them to define the term “diverse student.” Again, the teachers mentioned the same definitions in the chart below, but added family style and social skills to the list. This variety of ways to talk about diversity is important to note, as many researchers and educators (including myself) often consider “diversity” to signify

differences by race, ethnicity, immigrant status, socio-economic status, and cultural background. However, when thinking about diverse students, the teachers also thought about differences in behavior, age, and academic ability level. Future research needs to examine how such broad definitions of diversity may mask (or be code words) for racial and ethnic differences, and thus may suggest a new form of “colorblindness” (Plaut, Thomas, & Goren, 2009).

Finally, almost all of the Park School teachers were White and generally middle to upper-middle class. When talking about the challenges she was experiencing with the new students at Park School, one teacher said, “I think it’s probably, maybe we felt it more this year because we had so many kids come in that didn’t know the [Park School] expectations” (Teacher B3, interview, November 17, 2017). This statement could be interpreted to mean that the Park School expectation is that a student fits a specific (White, middle-class) profile. However, it could also be related to multiple district shifts in Middletown which would mean students would be constantly moving and learning new school expectations. In the previous chart, a teacher mentioned more students coming from “broken families.” While it was understood that she meant students from divorced households, the implication was that a single family household was not a positive environment.

Relationships and Assumptions

While there were differing definitions of the meaning of diversity and or multiculturalism, the real discovery came when I asked teachers about their beliefs as educators and any experiences which led to changes in their practice. During the interviews, I asked the teachers if there was ever a time when they had an epiphany as a

teacher. I further explained that this could be an “*a ha*” moment, where they may have been doing what they have always done and some situation or experience made them question why they responded in a particular way.

Table 6

“A ha” Moments

Teacher	<i>a ha</i> moment involving student	<i>a ha</i> moment involving peer	<i>a ha</i> moment involving other
A1	x		
A2	x		
B5			Book
A3	x		
A4		x	
A6	x		
C1	x		
B2	x		
B3	x		
C2		x	

Interestingly, these questions seemed to blend together. In ten of the 17 interviews, there was a specific experience which challenged the teacher’s long-held beliefs and assumptions. Table 6 categorizes those ten teachers’ “*a ha*” moments. In the following paragraphs, analyses will demonstrate how these challenges to long-held beliefs or assumptions may have led to a change in practice or Mezirow’s (1991) transformational learning. While nine of the 10 respondents who faced challenges made changes after the teacher consciously deepened a relationship either with a peer or a student, one made changes based on an enlightening book she had read. In all nine cases, the teachers reported it was actually the deepened relationship rather than instruction,

which they believed had improved student performance. Below are two examples of how those deepened relationships led to a change in practice.

One fifth-grade teacher provided an illustration of how a teacher's long-held beliefs or assumptions were challenged and later changed. The teacher told me about a young Hispanic student who was unprepared for school, but as she and the student became closer, he confided in her that his family was homeless and living in a car. She related the experience like this:

I guess there was one specific situation that I am thinking about is a student that came to me later in the year. He was so respectful, so nice, but he wasn't completing things. He wasn't wearing like his jacket outside. And he was kind of quiet, to himself. And he was of Mexican descent. But I found out later in the year that he was homeless and they were living out on a car, and I was like oh my gosh, how dare I be concerned about like his homework or that he's sleeping in class, like he's dealing with something that's so beyond what I can even begin to fathom or understand. (Teacher A1, interview, November 16, 2016)

She was then able to make alternate arrangements for homework and help get a winter coat for him to play outside on the playground. After that experience, the teacher said she never makes assumptions about students and families without getting to know them as individuals. As a teacher, it was easy for her to assume using her own background that every child would have the proper school attire and the ability to complete homework. The following passage from Mezirow (2000) can help us understand how this teacher's experience was transformational:

Transformative learning refers to the process by which we transform our taken-for-granted frames of reference (meaning perspectives, habits of mind, mind-sets) to make them more inclusive, discriminating, open, emotionally capable of change, and reflective so that they may generate beliefs and opinions that will prove more true or justified to guide action. (p. 7-8)

This fifth-grade teacher grew up attending a private school and admittedly had little exposure to any socioeconomic, cultural, or racial diversity. In her frame of reference, students lived in houses and had what they needed for school. These were ideas that she just assumed or took for granted. When the teacher's long-held views were challenged by what this student told her about his family, she had to critically reflect on what she heard. Mezirow adds that the validity or truthfulness of the source of the new information must be considered. If the teacher did not have the relationship with the student, she may not have trusted the information he relayed. This cognitive dissonance and reflection caused her to change her practice, and brought the idea that she was using her personal experiences as a barometer for making decisions about students to the forefront.

Another teacher recalled a student who she had early in her career who she described as "hard to like" (Teacher B2, interview, November 17, 2016). She viewed him as misbehaving in class and his behavior frustrated the teacher and other students. She worked hard to find out his likes and dislikes and learned he enjoyed helping the adult supervisors on the playground. With her assistance, he became a helper on the playground and then he started to realize successes in the classroom as well. She was able to step back and understand that she could not apply her ideas about what the student

needed based on her experience, but rather she needed to know him as an individual in order to motivate him. Teachers admitted building these relationships with students was not easy. In fact, it could be very difficult with the additional challenges students have in their lives, but that these relationships were the keys to success.

The “*a ha*” moments were not limited to interactions with students. While the majority spoke of transforming their outlook after deepening relationships with students, two of the teachers had “*a ha*” moments as a result of their interactions with other teachers. In one of those examples, a speech and language pathologist shared an epiphany which later led to a change in practice. In this example, the pathologist talked about a time where she was working alongside a new colleague. She explained that the new pathologist was teaching the students how to make the *S* sound. Afterwards, they had a discussion because the veteran disagreed with the new teacher’s approach. The veteran said she had been taught in college how to teach the *S* sound and it was different from the new teacher’s way of teaching. The veteran also realized she never had good results with her process. Eventually, the veteran teacher realized that her way of teaching may not have been best for the students. She switched to the new teacher’s methods and saw great results. The teacher explains in the following scenario.

But I was listening to her. She’s new out of school. She’s doing great. And she was teaching a class, and she was teaching students how to say *S*. And so, afterwards I said this is what you said and I told him last year to do this another way. And she said that you don’t say *S* that way, and I said yeah, I do. So, we had this big discussion and I was telling her I had been taught in college what to say to tell a kid to say *S*. And I did it for years and I really was not getting great results

on my S kiddos early in my career. And one day I did it for a kid. And I said, ‘No, you got to do it like this and say S,’ and when I modeled it I thought, ‘That’s not how I say S,’ but what I am telling him to do it is not how I say it. And the epiphany was like, ‘Oh, my gosh, I have been telling you kids wrong for two years and let’s try this instead,’ and he magically hit it just as soon as I – so, I became more aware of you really need to try some stuff out and don’t just believe what somebody says just because that’s how they say it too.

(Teacher A4, interview, November 16, 2016)

Whether in the interviews or on the questionnaires, the Park School teachers appeared willing to reach out and understand their students. In these nine cases, change came as a result of an interaction with a student or adult who had different experiences than their own. It was through relationships built on trust that those interactions and experiences turned into learning or growth opportunities.

Teachers were also asked about a specific event they might have encountered in the classroom which caused a change or modification their thinking or teaching. None of the responses about events in the classroom were directly related to academics. Typically, these events involved a student personally and not his or her academic ability. In fact, respondents mentioned how they needed to better understand or relate to the student in order to accomplish anything academic in school. A veteran teacher said she now works harder to build relationships with students and families in order to better understand each other’s goals and motivations: “Oh, I might have to work a little harder to make a relationship with this kid” (Teacher C2, interview, November 18, 2016). Other veteran teachers brought up the fact that after their classroom events, they now they make sure a

student's basic needs are met prior to instruction. The following paragraph is an excerpt from one of those teacher's responses:

When a student comes to school and is hungry or in need then it is important that we meet that basic need before we begin to work on academics. So then we have to also decide can we give homework or is that something that the family cannot handle right now because they are just trying to find food. Homework is not a current priority for them. Then we find a different way to help that student complete his or her work here at school and make sure we are meeting their needs and meeting the student where they are currently. (Teacher E, questionnaire, October 24, 2016)

This response is representative of what I have found in this research, similar to the “a ha” moment experienced by Teacher A1, recounted earlier. Regardless of the student's race, ethnicity, religion, or financial status, teachers generally believed that they had to get to know the students as individuals and understand their needs prior to setting any academic expectations.

Prior Experience with Diversity

As I mentioned earlier, two of the teachers had memorable childhood experiences regarding diversity which also may have played a part in their current beliefs about students. These memorable experiences may have helped them become more empathetic toward students whose background differs from the larger group. One White teacher who, as a teenager, moved to a predominantly Hispanic school said the following.

So, anyway, it was interesting – you know except for talking about ELL stuff, it was very interesting. It was hard on the Hispanic folks even though they

outnumbered us ... they didn't really understand the [White] culture. And they couldn't really talk about it much. (Teacher A4, interview, November 16, 2016)

Even though she was the minority within the school, she was still a majority member of the broader community that the Hispanic students sought to emulate. This teacher may have used this experience to be more understanding toward the new ELL population at Park School. Today, at Park School, students with diverse backgrounds would be celebrated as opposed to trying to assimilate them as was done in this participant's school.

The African-American teacher had a much different experience when she transferred to an all-White school in her district. Upon arrival at her new school, she was placed in the lowest reading group, even though she was an excellent reader. She recalled and perceived that she was placed in the low group because of the color of her skin. A short time later, she was questioned about her parents' professions by her teachers who could not believe that her father was a university professor.

What does he do there? Okay, I mean he wears a tie and a suit. I don't know.

Well, what they were saying was, you know, when they were asking what building he worked in, they were saying it as a custodian, and my mom obviously was one too (Teacher B7, interview, November 17, 2016)

During the interview, this teacher mentioned multiple encounters with racist behavior from teachers when she was a student, and later from adults while she herself was teaching. Her experience had a profound effect on her, and it definitely impacted her teaching by making her especially attuned to those students who are not part of the majority. She appreciates the opportunity to work at Park School because of the diversity,

which differed from her own schooling. When describing Park School she said, “...students from all backgrounds, all nations, various languages and coming together and learning to work as a community” (Teacher B7, follow-up interview, February 8, 2017). Interestingly, neither of these two teachers with memorable childhood diversity experiences, made any specific comments about how those experiences impacted their desire to build relationships with students, but because of those experiences, school leaders might consider them to be “brokers” in helping other teachers learn how to understand and interact with changing student populations.

A Pedagogical Toolbox

When asked about the changes teachers made to their craft based on experiences in the classroom, often change occurred during the formation of a deeper relationship with the student, as an individual, rather than changes based on a general population. The teachers’ responses showed that the students were more than a demographic, and it was impossible to paint them with the same brush. For example, consider the polite Hispanic student who lived in a car with his family. Homelessness is not the experience of every Hispanic student, nor is every student experiencing poverty Hispanic. The teacher had to form a deeper relationship with the individual student to understand his needs. So, in answer to my research question, yes teachers did change their craft and grow as educators. However, these changes were not necessarily a result of the student population changes, but rather the result of individualized efforts to better understand their students.

I decided to go deeper with the pedagogical question in the follow-up interviews. Specifically, I asked the teachers how their teaching pedagogy had changed from when their audience was more homogenous to now with the influx of ELL students. The

teachers gave me different teaching strategies listed in the chart below which they incorporate now, but acknowledged that they use these same strategies for non-ELL students as well. These learned strategies are a result of longer teaching experience. One of the teachers noted, “I think as I gain years of experience it also helped me understand different teaching strategies, different ways of presenting information that I’ve been able to see as more effective...” (Teacher C2, follow-up interview, February 8, 2017). This was an “*a ha*” moment for me, as what they gave me were really tools and strategies which teachers have in their bag of tricks, rather than a shift in thinking. However, these tools and strategies are only utilized and implemented once the teacher has an understanding of the individual student’s needs. It is important to note that Teacher C2 is a new ELL teacher, who until the year of this study had been a third grade teacher.

Table 7

Teaching Strategies for ELL Students

 Teaching strategies incorporated for current ELL population

1. Slow speaking down
 2. Increased use of technology (Some of these items were not available when teaching earlier)
 3. Put key words on the board
 4. Use reading strategies for younger students
 5. Purposeful partnering of students
 6. Understand not everyone has the same background experiences and look for connections
 7. Use more pictures
-

During one of the follow-up interviews, a teacher told me how she no longer makes assumptions that students all come to school with the same background information. The following is an excerpt from that interview in which I ask the teacher how her teaching has changed over the years.

I think now I don't assume that my students know certain things, I really have to make sure that my students have had certain background experiences to build on. For example, just because I know that I have been at the zoo many times and there're [sic] many children that have been to the zoo, I can't assume that my students know what a zoo is if I'm reading a book about going to the zoo. I have to maybe do a virtual field trip of the zoo, something to give them that experience whereas I think when I taught students who were less diverse, meaning maybe more economic, your higher SES [socioeconomic status] or whether that be kids that just maybe are more even like me. I'm a middle class white teacher and I'm speaking from middle class white experiences, because that's what I was given, but I can't assume that all of my students have had those experiences. I have to ask can I dig a little deeper so I definitely do that more. (Teacher C2, follow-up interview, February 8, 2017)

This is a great example of how the Park School teachers need to plan prior to an activity. Teachers cannot simply assume that their heterogeneous class have all had the same experiences as the teacher or each other, and they need to find ways for students to make connections to new learning.

Family Interactions

The last research question asked if veteran teachers continued with similar ways of interacting with family members after the school experienced demographic change. Based on the interviews, it was difficult to separate interactions related to the ELL population at Park School, and the trend for communication with families to be less frequent and more often electronic. Speaking about that trend, one teacher stated, “So, that’s definitely one thing that’s changed over time is it’s a lot more email now than it is – it used to be a lot of phone calls, but I would say I get a lot of parent emails” (Teacher A2, interview, November 16, 2016).

Meanwhile, two teachers mentioned that parent involvement is not what it once was at Park School. One of those teachers related her current experience and frustration:

And it’s not every student, but probably a handful of students that parents don’t respond or like I said I am trying to still get them in for conferences and they just keep cancelling. And then not responding when I ask them, you know, to set a different time, or not even answering the phone. And that was something that I very rarely dealt with in the past. (Teacher B2, interview, November 17, 2016)

This sentiment, echoed only by one other teacher, could be attributed to many factors and not necessarily the ELL population. Other teachers noted that the way they interacted with families had not changed over time. Teachers mentioned that they use newsletters, conferences, phone calls, emails, and weekly folders to interact with parents. Teachers at Park School are encouraged to have 100% of their students’ parents participate in conferences either face-to-face, at the student’s home, or by phone as a last resort. The

ELL teachers said they have a multicultural night, and they arrange to have interpreters available for non-English speaking parents during conferences.

Discussion

Earlier in this study, I explained that Mezirow's theory about transformational learning is essentially taking one's reflections on previously held assumptions and experiences in the light of new learning or situations, which creates a discomfort and challenges those existing views, causing one to change his or her perspective. I hypothesized that teachers who had little prior experience with new student demographics, and were willing to accept other world views may undergo transformational learning. I also provided a graphic (Figure 3) to help explain the stages a person progresses through in order achieve Mezirow's transformational learning.

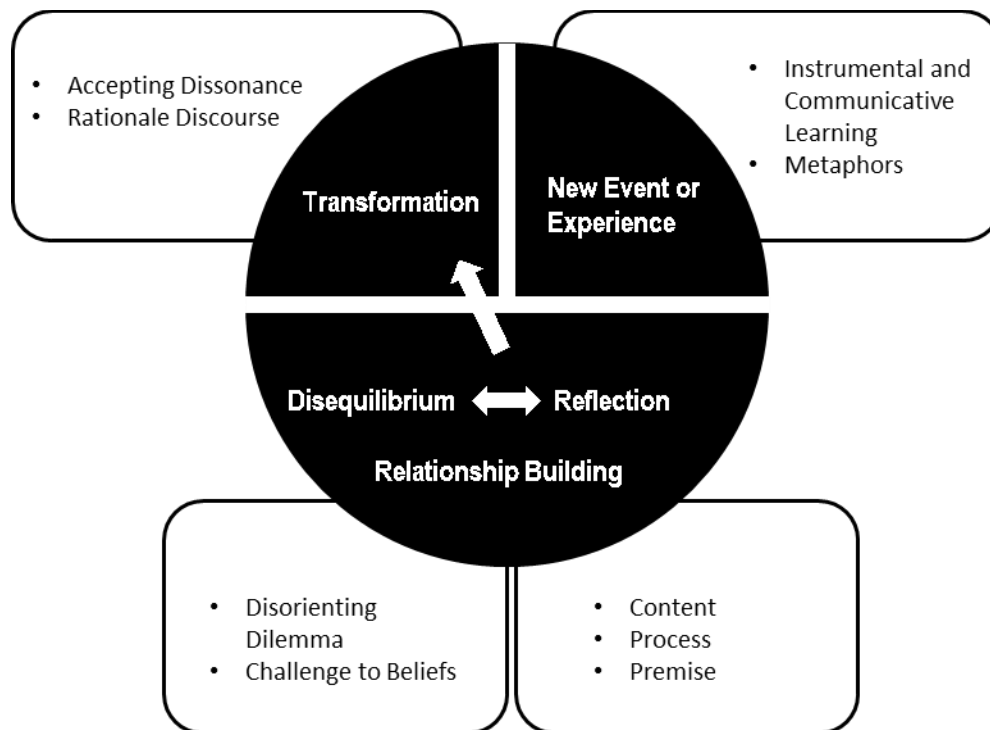
Unexpectedly, I learned from my research that teacher transformation was less inspired by student population demographics overall than relationships with individual students themselves. Based on this information, I have modified the original graphic (Figure 3) to make the cycle of transformation more applicable to what I discovered in this study (Figure 4). The **new event** or **experience** remains the same as the teacher is introduced to a new student or new ideas from a peer. However, the figure now shows that **reflection** and **disequilibrium** come within the context of teachers building relationships, or developing trust with and validation of the student or peer. Additionally, teachers may go back and forth between reflection and disequilibrium as he or she builds a relationship.

It is also during the time of reflection and disequilibrium that administrative support and teacher efficacy can play a role. Supportive administrators can foster an

environment that values reflection, discussion, and feedback, which are necessary elements of transformation and help build teacher confidence. The final area, **transformation**, is where the teacher makes a change in practice based on what they have learned. So while the original graphic intended to illustrate a teacher's path to transformation after an experience with a new population, the new graphic can also be used to illustrate a teacher's path based on an individual relationship with any student or peer.

Figure 4

Revised Concept Map for Transformational Learning



If we examine two examples from the interviews I provided earlier, we can follow those teachers as they progressed through the stages of transformation using the illustration above. The first example is the teacher whose student was not completing homework or bringing a jacket for recess. For that teacher, obviously the *event or experience* was the student not coming to school prepared. In the illustration, the next step in the process of transformation is reflection. There are three types of reflection. The first type is *content reflection*, where the person thinks about the actual experience itself. Next, *process reflection* is thinking about how to handle the experience. In this example, the teacher does this and concludes that she will build a deeper relationship over time with the student in order to gain a better understanding of how to motivate him. Finally, *premise reflection* involves examining long-held socially constructed assumptions, beliefs, and values about the experience or problem. In the teacher's experience, the student's behavior did not fit into her previously held assumptions which were that polite and well-mannered students come to school prepared. This experience was a challenge to her beliefs which brought the teacher to the next step in the progression toward transformation- *disequilibrium*. As she struggled to understand the student's actions, whose experiences were much different than her own, her reflections and their conversations helped her move to *transformation*. The teacher came to understand that the student was homeless, and through this experience the teacher had accepted a new understanding and henceforth changed the way she taught.

The second example is the veteran speech and language pathologist's experience. She was watching the new teacher conduct a lesson with students (*new event or experience*). The new teacher was conducting the lesson differently than the veteran had

always taught (*reflection*). The veteran had learned in college to teach the strategy a specific way and how then could it be incorrect (*disequilibrium*). The new teacher explained why her strategy made sense, and she did get better results than the veteran teacher who accepted this new knowledge and changed her teaching practice (*transformation*).

Although changing student demographics did not play a part in the second example of teacher transformation, there was still transformation and growth through new experiences. These two teachers, and the others interviewed who had transformative experiences, were in the right place figuratively and literally for growth opportunities. First, they were open to new learning, meaning they were able to accept someone else's experiences and truths as equally valid to their own. In fact, both teachers made changes to their practice as a result of the transformation. Secondly, as I explained earlier, and learned through the interviews, they had supportive administration and a collaborative and reflective environment. Each of those attributes are also key to what Runhaar et al. (2010) added to Mezirow's ideas on transformative learning.

Implications

School districts across the United States continue to offer professional development to teachers. Typically, those professional development opportunities are primarily devoted to poverty, different learning styles, and gifted education (Thomas, 2007). At the time of this research, the Middletown's five-year professional development plan listed poverty as its main source of study for teachers. As well-meaning as these topics of professional development are intended, based on the research I conducted offerings like Ruby Payne may do more harm than good. Teachers are given information

that fortifies or reinforces stereotypes and does not promote opportunities for dialogue which are crucial to transformation. It may lead to an overemphasis on issues of “broken families,” as shown earlier.

The research conducted in this dissertation demonstrates that populations cannot be generalized into a one-size-fits-all understanding of student needs. Two students may not come to poverty the same way and may have different life experiences and needs as a result. For example, one student may have lived in poverty their entire life and know nothing else, while another student may experience poverty on a sporadic basis. Yes, these students may both be at the same place currently, but the experiences they have had to bring them to that place are unique to each of them. The same can be said of the international student born in the United States of non-English speaking refugee parents, and the international student here temporarily whose parents are visiting professors at the local university. Again, they are both international, but will have very different life experiences and needs. It is the deep relationship that teachers’ form with these students that leads to growth and understanding. As educators, we may be better off learning how to build relationships with students, rather than studying broad ideas about different groups of children (e.g., “poor children”).

Learning to build relationships with students also helps with the idea of sheltered instruction. Sheltered instruction takes many of the existing best practices teachers are already familiar with and adds instruction which specifically targets students who are new to the English language. Originally, sheltered instruction was used only with ELL students, but now the benefits are seen in classrooms with both English and non-English speakers in the same classroom. Other key features of sheltered instruction include;

speaking slower, posting key words or ideas, and letting ELL students use resources in their first language (Hanson-Thomas, 2008). Just as in the zoo example which was provided earlier, teachers practicing sheltered instruction try to incorporate background knowledge particular to the individual ELL student. Sheltered instruction meshes nicely with the relationship building ideas presented in this research. Once the teacher understands the students as individuals, they are better able to target their instruction.

Summary

In this section, I reviewed the main findings of this research; (1) the term diversity takes on different meanings for different people, and therefore as a word does not dictate a specific response, (2) relationships with individual students take precedent and need to be in place prior to determining academic agendas, (3) when long-held teacher assumptions are challenged, a change in teaching practice may take place, and (4) veteran teachers maintain a pedagogical toolbox that they can tailor to an individual student's needs. Additionally, I shared how those findings can be interpreted through transformational learning theory, and addressed the implications of this study such as refining existing professional development and using sheltered instruction. The next section will explain how I intend to disseminate the implications of my research using my connections as a practitioner as well as sharing a policy brief.

SECTION FIVE:
CONTRIBUTION TO PRACTICE

Plan for Dissemination

The research contained in this study is designed for all teachers and administrators, especially those who currently or will eventually work with students whose backgrounds differ from those with which they are familiar. Ultimately, through recommendations for professional development based on teachers' own perspectives and experiences, the purpose of this study was to improve the way we teach, interact, and relate to students, in order to improve the success rate for all students regardless of their race, religion, economic status, or background. The intention of a dissertation-in-practice, such as this, is to initially share the results of this study in the school districts where the research was gathered and conducted. The concept of transformational learning may not be a term many teachers and administrators are familiar with, but the stories told by teachers may help shed light on the ideas underpinning the process.

Although this research is primarily directed at teachers and administrators, it is first necessary for me to find pathways into school districts. As I have experience in school districts in four states, I will use those connections and relationships with district leaders as an opportunity to present this study and findings. It is my hope that through these initial presentations, new connections will be made and future opportunities will become available.

I prepared a policy brief for dissemination to district leadership as an initial foray into the school districts (Appendix D). The purpose of the policy brief is to give interested parties a succinct idea about the research while capturing the highlights in a format which can be easily understood. In addition to summarizing the main points and

rationale of the study, the policy brief explains why the research is relevant to their school district.

Target Journals

Next, I plan to publish results formally. Since the primary audience for this research is administrators and teachers, it is with them in mind that I chose two target journals for publication. The first is ASCD (Association for Supervision and Curriculum) whose broad reach and diverse readership has a mission stating, “ASCD is a global community dedicated to excellence in learning, teaching, and leading. ASCD’s innovative solutions promote the success of each child” (ASCD, 2016). It is my belief that ASCD’s mission captures the idea that each student should have an equal opportunity for success, and it is a teacher and leader’s duty to be active learners and provide the opportunities for all to be successful.

The second submission is a popular magazine for teachers. *Teaching Tolerance* is a bi-yearly publication geared directly toward teachers who are interested in diversity and social justice issues. The magazine has been in print since 1991 and 450,000 educators receive the each publication twice a year. I feel that the content of this study would appeal to the audience of *Teaching Tolerance*.

I believe that Teaching Tolerance readers would be an appropriate audience for my findings, and I would especially highlight the importance of building relationships, and the many definitions that teachers have of diversity. I would also include my implications adding to the current professional development offerings to help foster teacher growth and transformation.

Summary

When we consider the research on professional development and understand that teachers want specific strategies and interventions that they can put to use immediately, it makes sense that one of my findings shows teachers use a “pedagogical toolbox” when trying to help their students. It is the job of school leaders to make sure that the toolbox is filled with the most appropriate and current ideas for working with diverse students.

Additionally, one has to consider, whether Middletown School District’s efforts to provide professional development with regard to poverty helped teachers put some items in their toolbox. Or, alternatively, did it encourage some potentially deficit or negative perceptions of students? In order to better understand how the district’s efforts may have impacted the findings of this study, it would be necessary to broaden and continue this kind of study.

It is also important to consider how to help teachers build relationships with students’ families as well. From the teacher interviews, it was apparent that there was limited interaction with families regardless of the students’ demographics. It may warrant further examination to determine how teacher-family interactions affect the students’ success.

Where Do I Go from Here?

I am asked this question by friends and colleagues (and I also ask myself) as this journey comes to an end. My desire to help teachers grow and all students achieve success is even stronger now than when I began my study. When I joined the EdD program, I was a school administrator with teaching and administrative experience across three states in two regions of the U.S. I thought I had a solid understanding of teachers’

needs and how U.S. schools address changing student populations. As I went about my research for this dissertation-in-practice, I learned that what I actually knew was only a fraction of what is currently happening in our schools here and abroad. My goal now is to take what I have learned about leadership from the EdD program, along with the issues related to equity that I am so passionate about in my research, and continue my work to help school leaders, teachers, and students grow. In order to achieve my goal, I foresee a short and long-term plan.

My immediate plan is to share my findings with the school and the system in which my research was conducted. I know this research is relevant there. I also know that the system's leadership is forward-thinking about teacher support and professional development. I have good relationships there, and I would like to leverage that in order to present my policy brief and ideas to district leadership. Because my research and better understanding of the need for teacher-student relationships came to fruition within the district, and I used local teacher participants, a vested interest would be in place.

My long-term goal would be to create a curriculum and professional development model. This model would ideally help teachers recognize how to fulfill the unique needs of diverse student populations while acknowledging existing biases that we all bring to the classroom.

References

- Adamson, F. & Darling-Hammond, L. (2012). Funding Disparities and the Inequitable Distribution of Teachers: Evaluating Sources and Solutions. *Education Policy Analysis Archives*, 20, 37. doi:<http://dx.doi.org/10.14507/epaa.v20n37.2012>
- Aha! Process. (2016). *Ruby payne, Ph.D.* Retrieved from <http://www.ahaprocess.com/who-we-are/dr-ruby-payne/>
- Association for Supervision and Curriculum. (2016). *About ASCD*. Retrieved from <http://www.ascd.org/about-ascd.aspx>
- Atkinson, R. (2002). The life story interview. In Gubrium, J. F., & Holstein, J. A. (Eds.), *Handbook of interview research: Context & method*. (pp. 121-140). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Bogdan, R.C. & Biklen, S.K. (2003). *Qualitative research for education: An introduction to theory and methods* (4th ed.). Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon.
- Bolman, L.G., & Deal, T.E. (2008). *Reframing organizations: Artistry, choice, and leadership*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Bomer, R., Dworin, J.E., May, L., & Semingson, P. (2008). Miseducating teachers about the poor: A critical analysis of Ruby Payne's claims about poverty. *Teachers College Record*, 110(12), 2497-2531.
- Boyd, W. (1976). The public, the professionals, and educational policy making: Who governs? *Teachers College Record*, 77(4), 539-578.
- Cochran-Smith, M. & Zeichner, K.M. (Eds.). (2005). *Studying teacher education: A report by AERA panel on research and teacher education*. Mahwah, NJ: Routledge.

- Creswell, J.W. (2009). *Research design: Quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods approaches* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Creswell, J.W. (2011). *Educational research: Planning, conducting, and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research*. (4th ed.). Pearson.
- Daniel, J. & Friedman, S. (2005). Taking the next step: Preparing teachers to work with culturally diverse children. *Beyond the Journal: Young Children on the Web*. Retrieved from <http://journal.naeyc.org/btj/200511/DanielFriedmanBTJ1105.pdf>
- Darling-Hammond, L. (2004). Inequality and the right to learn: Access to qualified teachers in California's public schools. *Teachers College Record*, 106(10), 1936-1966.
- Dewey, J. (1910). *How we think*. Boston: D.C. Heath & Co.
- Dharan, V.M. (2015). Beginning teachers and diversity – why the need for extended critical professional support. *Asia-Pacific Journal Of Teacher Education*, 43(1), 61-74. doi:10.1080/1359866X.2014.940840
- Dorner, L.M. (2011). Contested communities in a debate over dual language education: The import of "public" values on public policies. *Educational Policy*, 25(4), 577-613.
- Ellen, I.G., O'Regan, K., Conger, D. (2009). Immigration and urban schools: The dynamics of demographic change in the nation's largest school district. *Education and Urban Society*, 41(3), 295-316.
- Evans, E.A. (2007). School leaders and their sensemaking about race and demographic change. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 43(2), 159-188. doi:10.1177/0013161X06294575

- Face the Facts USA. (2015). *Limited-English students test public schools*. Retrieved from <http://www.facethefactsusa.org/facts/limited-english-students-test-public-schools>
- Finnigan, K., & Stewart, T. (2009). Leading change under pressure: An examination of principal leadership in low-performing schools. *Journal of School Leadership*, *19*(5), 586-618.
- Flores, W.V. & Benmayor, R., (1997). *Latino cultural citizenship: Claiming identity, space, and rights*. Boston: Boston Press.
- Frey, W.H. (2011). *Melting pot cities and suburbs: Racial and ethnic change in metro America in the 2000s*. Washington, DC. The Brookings Institution.
- Galton, M.J., & MacBeath, J.C. (2008). *Teachers Under Pressure*. Los Angeles: Sage Publications Ltd.
- Gándara, P., Maxwell-Jolly, J., & Driscoll, A. (2005). Listening to teachers of English language learners: A survey of California teachers' challenges, experiences, and professional development needs. *Policy Analysis for California Education, PACE* (NJ1).
- Garcia, E., Arias, M.B., Harris-Murri, N.J., Serna, C. (2010). Developing responsive teachers: A challenge for a demographic reality. *Journal of Teacher Education*, *61*(1-2), 132-142.
- Goldhaber, D. & Cowan, J. (2014) Excavating the teacher pipeline: Teacher preparation programs and teacher attrition. *Journal of Teacher Education*, *65*, 449-462.
doi:10.1177/0022487114542516
- Gorski, P.C. (2008) Peddling poverty for profit: Elements of oppression in Ruby Payne's framework. *Equity & Excellence in Education*, *41*(1), 130-148.

- Guskey, T.R. (2002). Professional development and teacher change. *Teachers and Teaching*, 8(3), 381-391.
- Hansen-Thomas, H. (2008). Sheltered instruction: Best practices for ELLs in the mainstream. *Kappa Delta Pi Record*, 44(4), 165-169.
- Hollins, E.R., & Guzman, M.T. (2005). Research on preparing teachers for diverse populations. *Studying teacher education: The report of the AERA panel on research and teacher education*, 477, 548.
- Holme, J.J., Diem, S. & Welton, A. (2014). Suburban school districts and demographic change: The technical, normative, and political dimensions of response. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 50(1), 34-66. Doi: 10.1177/0013161X13484038
- House, R.J. (1971). A path goal theory of leader effectiveness. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 16(3), 321.
- IGI Global. (2017). *What is a veteran teacher?* Retrieved from <http://www.igi-global.com/dictionary/veteran-teacher/51332>
- Karabenick, S.A., & Noda, P.A.C. (2004). Professional development implications of teachers' beliefs and attitudes toward English language learners. *Bilingual Research Journal*, 28(1), 55-75.
- Kaplan, L.S. & Owings, W.A. (2013). The unaddressed costs of changing student demographics. *Journal of Education Finance*, 39(1), 15-46.
- Keegan, R. (1982). *The evolving self: Problem and process in human development*. London, England: Harvard University Press.

- King, K.P. (2002). Educational technology professional development as transformative learning opportunities. *Computers & Education*, 39, 283-297. doi:10.1016/S0360-1315(02)00073-8
- Klem, A.M., & Connell, J.P. (2004). Relationships matter: Linking teacher support to student engagement and achievement. *Journal of School Health*, 74(7), 262-273.
- Ladson-Billings, G. (2011). Is meeting the diverse needs of all students possible?. *Kappa Delta Pi Record*, 48(1), 13-15.
- Levi, D. (2014). *Group dynamics for teams* (4th ed.). Los Angeles, CA: Sage.
- Liljedahl, P. (2014). Approaching professional learning: What teachers want. *Mathematics Enthusiast*, 11(1), 109-122.
- McCormick, M.P., & O'Connor, E.E. (2015). Teacher-child relationship quality and academic achievement in elementary school: Does gender matter? *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 107(2), 502-516. doi:10.1037/a0037457
- Machovcová, K. (2017). Czech elementary school teachers' implicit expectations from migrant children. *International Journal Of Educational Development*, 53, 92-100. doi:10.1016/j.ijedudev.2016.12.006
- Marbley, A.F., Bonner, F., McKisick, S., Henfield, M.S., Watts, L.M., & Shen, Y. (2007). Interfacing Culture Specific Pedagogy with Counseling: a Proposed Diversity Training Model for Preparing Preservice Teachers for Diverse Learners. *Multicultural Education*, 14(3), 8-16.
- Matherson, L.L., & Windle, T.T. (2017). What do teachers want from their professional development? Four emerging themes. *Delta Kappa Gamma Bulletin*, 83(3), 28-32.

- Merriam, S. (2004). The role of cognitive development in Mezirow's transformational learning theory. *Adult Education Quarterly*, 55(1), 60-68.
doi:10.1177/0741713604268891
- Merriam, S.B. (2009). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation*. John Wiley & Sons.
- Merriam, S.B., & Bierema, L.L. (2014). *Adult learning: Linking theory and practice*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Mezirow, J. (1991). *Transformative dimensions of adult learning*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Mezirow, J. (2000). *Learning as transformation: Critical perspectives on a theory in progress*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Miller, C.M. & Martin, B.N. (2014). Principal preparedness for leading in demographically changing schools: Where is the social justice training? *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*.
doi:10.1177/1741143213513185
- Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. (2016). Missouri Comprehensive Data System. Retrieved from
<http://mcds.dese.mo.gov/quickfacts/SitePages/DistrictInfo.aspx>
- MO.gov. (2017). *Missouri Hispanic or Latino (of any race) numeric population change 2000 to 2010*. Retrieved from
<http://archive.oa.mo.gov/bp/pdf/files/NumericChangeHispanicPop.pdf>
- Mintzberg, H. (1979). *The structure of organizations*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.

- National Center for Education Information. (2011). *Profiles of teachers in the U.S. 2011*. Retrieved from <http://www.edweek.org/media/pot2011final-blog.pdf>
- National Center for Educational Statistics. (2016). *Racial/ethnic enrollment in public schools*. Retrieved from https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator_cge.asp
- National Council for Teachers of English. (2008). *English language learners: A policy brief*. Retrieved from <http://www.ncte.org/library/NCTEFiles/Resources/PolicyResearch/ELLResearchBrief.pdf>
- Nemec, P.B. (2012). Education and training: Transformative learning. *Psychiatric Rehabilitation Journal*, 35(6), 478-479. doi:10.1037/h0094585
- Northouse, P.G. (2013). *Leadership: Theory and practice* (6th ed.). Los Angeles, CA: Sage.
- Oakes, J. (1992). Can tracking research inform practice? Technical, normative, and political considerations. *Educational Researcher*, 4(12).
- O'Hara, S., & Pritchard, R.H. (2008). Meeting the Challenge of Diversity: Professional Development for Teacher Educators. *Teacher Education Quarterly*, 35(1), 43-61.
- Paine, L. (1990). *Orientation towards diversity: What do prospective teachers bring?* (Report No. 89-9). East Lansing, MI: The National Center for Research on Teacher Education.
- Pianta, R.C., Hamre, B.K., & Allen, J.P. (2012). Teacher-student relationships and engagement: Conceptualizing, measuring, and improving the capacity of classroom interactions. *In Handbook of research on student engagement* (pp. 365-386). Springer US.

- Plaut, V.C., Thomas, K.M., Goren, M.J. (2009). Is multiculturalism or colorblindness better for minorities? *Physiological Science*, 20(4), 444-446.
- Portes, A. & Rumbaut, R.G. (1996). *Immigrant America: a portrait*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Portes, A. & Rumbaut, R.G. (2001). *Legacies: The story of the immigrant second generation*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Portes, P., & Smagorinsky, P. (2010). Static Structures, Changing Demographics: Educating Teachers for Shifting Populations in Stable Schools. *English Education*, 42(3), 236-247. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40607989>
- Ray, A. & Bowman, B. (2003). Learning multicultural competence: Developing early childhood practitioners' effectiveness in working with children from culturally diverse communities. Final report to the A.L. Mailman Family Foundation. Initiative on Race, Class, and Culture in Early Childhood. Chicago, IL: Erikson Institute. Retrieved from <https://www.erikson.edu/wp-content/uploads/Teacherred.pdf>
- Reeves, J.R. (2006). Secondary teacher attitudes toward including English-language learners in mainstream classrooms. *The Journal of Educational Research*, (3). 131.
- Runhaar, P., Sanders, K. & Yang, H. (2010). Stimulating teachers' reflection and feedback asking; An interplay of self-efficacy, learning goal orientation, and transformational leadership. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 26, 1154-1161. doi:10.1016/j.tate.2010.02.011

- Santoro, N., & Forghani-Arani, N. (2015). Interrogating practice in culturally diverse classrooms: what can an analysis of student resistance and teacher response reveal?. *European Journal of Teacher Education*, 38(1), 58-70.
- Schön, D.A. (1983). *The reflective practitioner: How professionals think in action*. New York, NY: Basic Books.
- Taylor, E.W. (2009). Fostering transformative learning. In J. Mezirow & E.W. Taylor (Eds.), *Transformative learning in practice: Insights from community, workplace, and higher education* (pp. 148-157). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Teaching Tolerance. (2017). *About us*. Retrieved from <http://www.tolerance.org/about>
- The Glossary of Education Reform. (2013). *Professional development*. Retrieved from <http://edglossary.org/professional-development/>
- Thomas, T.G. (2007). New and veteran teachers' perspectives about delivering multicultural education. *Curriculum & Teaching Dialogue*, 9(1/2), 113-129.
- Turner, E.O. (2014). Districts' responses to demographic change: Making sense of race, class, and immigration in political and organizational context. *American Education Research Journal*, 52(1) 4-39. doi:10. 3102/0002831214561469
- United States Department of Agriculture. (2015). *School meals: Income eligibility guidelines*. Retrieved from <https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2015-03-31/pdf/2015-07358.pdf>
- United States Department of Education. (2015). *Programs: Improving basic programs operated by local educational agencies (Title I, Part A)*. Retrieved from <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/titleiparta/index.html>

Valenzuela, A. (1999). *Subtractive schooling: U.S.-Mexican youth and the politics of caring*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

We Are Teachers. (2015). *Are you a veteran teacher? Here's how you know*. Retrieved from <https://www.weareteachers.com/are-you-a-veteran-teacher-heres-how-to-know/>

Wei, R.C., Darling-Hammond, L., Adamson, F. (2010). *Professional development in the United States: Trends and challenges*. Dallas, TX: National Staff Development Council.

Appendix A

Initial Teacher Survey

I would appreciate you taking the time to complete this survey. This is an initial questionnaire designed to help further my research on how teachers adapt to a changing student demographic population. The purpose of this research is to help new and veteran teachers and administrators, whose schools are going through demographic changes, learn from the experiences of veteran teachers who have taught through those changes.

1. What is your gender?
 - Male
 - Female

2. How do you identify your race/ethnicity? (Please mark as many as apply or you may write in other identity markers.)
 - White
 - Black or African American
 - American Indian or Alaska Native
 - Asian
 - Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
 - Other _____

3. Highest level of education
 - Bachelors
 - Masters
 - Specialist
 - Doctorate

4. Years teaching at current school

5. Total years teaching

6. In your own words, please describe your current school's student demographic population.

7. What is your perception of your school's student body?

8. Does your school's current student population reflect a change from what it had been in the past five years? If so, can you describe the previous population?

9. How do you think teaching today differs from when you started your career?
10. Can you give an example of a significant event you encountered in the classroom, which caused you to change or modify your thinking about teaching?

If you wish to be contacted about continuing in the study via an interview, please fill out the following information or send an email to: garydgabel@gmail.com. You may also choose to return this survey anonymously:

Please enter your first and last name

Email Address

The best phone number to reach you

Appendix B

Narrative Interview Protocol

Introduction

First of all, I appreciate your willingness to help me with my research. Secondly, I am grateful for the opportunity for us to have a conversation today, which may possibly help other new or veteran teachers and administrators who are experiencing the same demographic changes you have experienced in the classroom.

Purpose

For this interview, I am interested in hearing about your experience in the classroom, but I am also interested in the experiences which lead you to becoming a teacher, and what you think the future holds. Our conversation should not last more than ninety minutes, and at any point if you are uncomfortable answering a question, please let me know. I would like to make an audio recording of this interview, so I can transcribe it at a later time.

Interview

1. Let's start by telling me about your experience as a student.
 - a. Tell me what you liked about school as a child? Disliked?
 - b. Describe your school for me.
 - c. What were your teachers like?
 - d. Tell me about your friends at the time.
2. Tell me about yourself and your life before you became a teacher.
3. Tell me about your decision to become a teacher.
 - a. What was your earliest recollection of knowing that would be your career choice?
 - b. Were there experiences that solidified that decision?
4. What has it been like being a teacher?
 - a. Tell me about the things you enjoy as a teacher.
 - b. What are the things that bother you as a teacher?
 - c. Can you remember an experience that really affirmed this career choice?
 - d. Was there ever an experience that made you question your career choice?
 - e. Do you like to reflect on your day (of teaching)? Explain what that is like?
5. Tell me about your current school and classroom.
 - a. Describe your classroom? Your students?
 - b. Describe your school?
 - c. Tell me about the other teachers in your school.
 - d. Describe teachers with whom you like to work. What are they like?
 - e. Tell me about your administrators.

- f. What are your students like this year? How do they compare to previous years' students?
 - g. Describe an ideal student.
 - h. What interactions do you have with students' families?
 - i. Do you talk to other teachers or administrators about your experiences in the classroom? What does that conversation sound like? Who offers you advice? Do you heed that advice?
6. Let's talk about your beliefs as a teacher.
- a. Can you remember a time where you had an epiphany as a teacher? Explain the experience in as much detail as possible. What led up to the experience? Who were the key players? Who or what helped you through or process the experience?
7. Have you had any experiences that changed the way you teach? If yes, how? If no, why?
- a. Explain the experience in as much detail as possible. What led up to the experience? Who were the key players? Who or what helped you through or process the experience?
 - b. Did you ever have an idea or perception about a student and later realized you were incorrect?

Appendix C

Follow-up Interview Questions

1. The term diversity was mentioned quite often when I was conducting interviews. What does the term “diverse students” mean to you?
2. All of the teachers I talked to had started teaching to a much different audience. How has your teaching changed today from when your students were less diverse?
3. Respondents also mentioned that [Park] is a multicultural school. What does that mean to you?
4. In the interviews, I didn’t hear much about pedagogy or teaching practices that might have changed over time. Do you use any different approaches now, than in the past? How about with your ELL students? If yes, can you describe one, or a particular story with one ELL student?
5. Almost all of the teachers I interviewed discussed the importance of building relationships with students today. Do you agree? How do you view the importance of building relationships now, versus when your students were less diverse? Have your thoughts or practices on this changed over time? Can you give a specific example?

Appendix D

Policy Brief

Policy Brief

Relationship Building: The missing piece of Professional Development



Key Findings

Relationships with students are essential:

- Over 74% of the Park School veteran teachers expressed a stronger desire to build individual relationships with students prior to making academic decisions.
- Park School veteran teachers did not change their teaching practices based on populations in general, but they did make changes in their practice after getting to know their students as individuals.
- Nine of the seventeen teachers who built strong relationships with students (and other teachers) realized transformational growth.

Policy Recommendations

SCHOOL DISTRICTS:

In conjunction with other professional development offerings, add instruction on how to build and understand the importance of individualized relationships with students.

ADMINISTRATORS:

Provide time for teachers to dialogue and reflect with each other and encourage teachers to build community and relationships with their students.

TEACHERS:

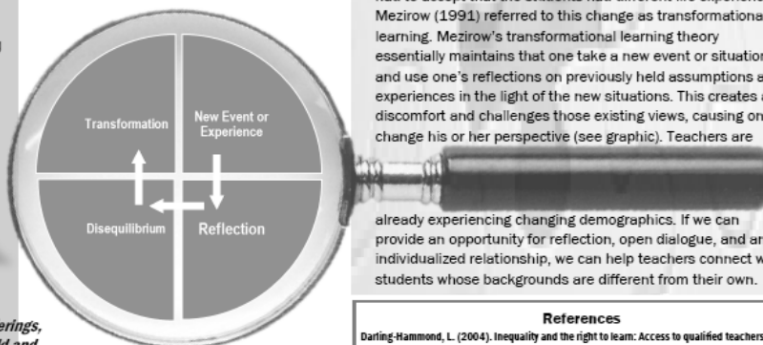
Build time in your schedule to get to know students individually prior to making academic decisions.

Executive Summary

Student demographics in American schools are continually changing, but we may be missing the mark with current professional development themes intended to help teachers meet students' needs. In addition to our current professional development efforts, we should help teachers learn how to build relationships with students in order to maximize outcomes.

Scope of Problem

American schools are constantly evolving. What once seemed predictable is now a dynamic, rapidly changing environment. Schools are experiencing an influx of impoverished students with attending needs as well as increasing numbers of culturally and linguistically diverse students with similar wide ranges of expectations (Portes & Rumbaut, 1996; Portes & Rumbaut, 2001; Ellen, O'Regan et al., 2009; Kaplan & Owings, 2013). According to Turner (2014), one-third of the children in the United States live in poverty, and one-fourth of the students in the United States under eighteen belong to immigrant families. Amidst these dramatic changes, we have a veteran teaching force whose methodology of instruction was formed prior to these diverse changes that impact their classrooms. As a result, America's education system increasingly fails to prepare teachers to cope to the detriment these groups who have the greatest educational needs (Darling-Hammond 2004).



Methods, Approaches, and Results

In this qualitative research study, we interviewed 17 veteran teachers in a school representative of many schools experiencing changes in its proportion of students from immigrant and lower socioeconomic families. The goal of this study was to better understand how veteran teachers adapt and grow when the school's population changes. If there were learning opportunities that we could replicate to train new and veteran teachers at other schools, it would directly benefit other teachers and our students.

The participants in the study were veteran teachers with over five years of teaching experience and had been at their school prior to and during the demographic shift in population. The teachers answered questions designed to gain insight into changes in their beliefs about students, their pedagogical approaches, and any assumptions they may have made about students of backgrounds different from their own.

Nine of the participants whose experiences led to positive changes in their beliefs and pedagogical approaches only made those changes after they consciously deepened a relationship either with a peer or a student. In fact, the teachers reported that it was actually the deepened relationship rather than instruction which led them to understanding their students' needs.

TRANSFORMATION

As these teachers connected with their students, they were better able to understand their academic needs. The teachers had to accept that the students had different life experiences. Mezirow (1991) referred to this change as transformational learning. Mezirow's transformational learning theory essentially maintains that one take a new event or situation, and use one's reflections on previously held assumptions and experiences in the light of the new situations. This creates a discomfort and challenges those existing views, causing one to change his or her perspective (see graphic). Teachers are

already experiencing changing demographics. If we can provide an opportunity for reflection, open dialogue, and an individualized relationship, we can help teachers connect with students whose backgrounds are different from their own.

References

- Darling-Hammond, L. (2004). Inequality and the right to learn: Access to qualified teachers in California's public schools. *Teachers College Record, 106*(10), 1936-1966.
- Ellen, L.G., O'Regan, K., Conger, D. (2009). Immigration and urban schools: The dynamics of demographic change in the nation's largest school district. *Education and Urban Society, 41*(3), 295-316.
- Kaplan, L.S. & Owings, W.A. (2013). The unaddressed costs of changing student demographics. *Journal of Education Finance, 39*(1), 15-46.
- Mezirow, J. (1991). *Transformative dimensions of adult learning*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Portes, A. & Rumbaut, R.G. (1996). *Immigrant America: a portrait*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Portes, A. & Rumbaut, R.G. (2001). *Legacies: The story of the immigrant second generation*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Turner, E.O. (2014). Districts' responses to demographic change: Making sense of race, class, and immigration in political and organizational context. *American Education Research Journal, 52*(1) 4-39. doi:10.3102/0002831214561469

"They [students] won't achieve if you don't have that relationship." - 5th grade teacher at Park School

VITA

Gary Gabel has been an educator for over 22 years. He started out as a kindergarten teacher, and eventually taught most elementary school grades before earning an endorsement to teach gifted education. In 2005, his principal approached him about pursuing an administrative degree, and he has been involved in educational administration since that time. Gary has served as an assistant principal in middle and elementary schools in Georgia and Missouri. He worked with preservice teachers at Florida State University in the college of education. Currently, he is an administrator at the South Carolina Governor's School for Science and Mathematics. He holds a BSEd and MEd from Georgia State University. He is interested equity in education.