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BRILL

Common Actions: Participatory Action Research as a Practice for Promoting Positive Social Action among and between New Canadian Church Planters and Denominational Leaders

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Abstract

The Greater Toronto Area remains the major immigrant destination centre in Canada. New Canadians are welcomed but not necessarily well integrated into the lives of churches. Our experience and research has shown that this lack of integration can extend to new Canadians who start churches yet are not integrated with denominations or church planting organizations. The New Canadian Church Planter project is an ongoing participatory action research project that brings together new Canadian church planters and denominational leaders as equals. It engages these groups in conversation to identify issues of concern, facilitate shared learning, and promote positive social action. This paper uses data from that project to explore the effectiveness of participatory action research in facilitating those objectives. The project was effective at breaking down isolation, encouraging limited collaboration, developing localized resource sharing, and in disseminating learning but not at developing positive social action external to the meetings themselves.

Keywords

1   Introduction

A recent Canada wide study has demonstrated that new Canadians[1] are wel-
comed to participate in a range of Canadian churches but are not necessarily
well integrated into the lives of Canadian churches.[2] This lack of integration
can extend to new Canadians who start churches in Canada who are often not
integrated with denominational or church planting organizations. New Cana-
dians are poorly represented in events and networks designed to encourage the
creation and support of new churches in Canada (usually called church plant-
ing).[3] However, there is also a growing awareness among Christian leaders of
the role of international missionaries within cities like Toronto and increased
interest in the role longer established churches and denominational organiza-
tions can play in active learning and partnership with immigrant church plants
and the individuals who lead them.[4] For the purpose of this study, these indi-
viduals are referred to as new Canadian church planters.

Cities that attract a large number of immigrants have been gateway cities
to a global diversity of people. As a result they have attracted the attention
of both denominational organizations and individual new Canadian church

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1   The term "New Canadians" refers to recent immigrants to Canada—whether or not they are
    actually Canadian citizens.
2   Rich Janzen, Mark D. Chapman and James W. Watson, "Integrating Immigrants Into the Life
    of Canadian Urban Christian Congregations: Findings From a National Survey." *Review of
    Religious Research* 53, no. 4 (2012), pp. 441–70.
3   Mark D. Chapman and James W. Watson, "Making Contact: Explaining the Personal Networks
    of Contemporary Canadian Church Planters." *Canadian Society for Studies in Religion Annual
    Meeting* (2011), For the purposes of this paper a church planter is an individual or individuals
    who are involved in developing new expressions of Christian community (local churches). It
    may or may not be associated with an existing church community. It usually contains some
    Christians but often the objective is to develop a new church primarily with people who are
    not actively participating in a Christian community.
4   Narry Santos, "What's a Missionary Doing in Canada? The Story of Greenhills Christian Fel-
    lowship," in *Green Shoots Out of Dry Ground: Growing a New Future for the Church in Canada*,
    ed. John P. Bowen (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf & Stock, 2013); Connie denBok, "Church Plant-
    ing by Immigrant Christians—and What the Rest of Us Can Learn," in *Green Shoots Out of
    Dry Ground: Growing a New Future for the Church in Canada*, ed. John P. Bowen (Eugene,
    Oregon: Wipf & Stock, 2013). Church planting initiatives arise from Canadian denominations
    and from at least three different, interdenominational, national Canadian church planting
    groups (Church Planting Canada—http://churchplantingcanada.ca, C2C network—http://
    www.c2cnetwork.ca, Vision Ministries Canada—http://www.vision-ministries.org).

planters.[5] These new Canadian church planters may go looking for administra-
tive, legal or financial support, possibly after they have started a church. They
may also desire a connection for fellowship and a sense of common mission
or theological perspective (e.g., they were part of a Baptist denomination in
their previous country and so seek affiliation with a Baptist denomination in
Canada).

It is this context that led to the development of the New Canadian Church
Planter project by the Tyndale Intercultural Ministry Centre. This project pro-
duced the data on which this paper is based. The project is an ongoing par-
ticipatory action research project that brings together new Canadian church
planters (NCCP) and denominational leaders (DL) in the Greater Toronto Area.
It has four objectives: to identify and break down the isolation of NCCP in the
Golden Horseshoe;[6] to connect new Canadian church planters and denomina-
tional leaders in collaborative relationships; to identify the Tyndale Intercul-
tural Ministry Centre as a resource; and to disseminate ongoing learning from
the project. Collectively we identify these objectives as positive social action.

This paper describes the context that shaped these discussions. It then de-
scribes participatory action research, explores why it is of value in this context,
how it was used, and why it might be expected to contribute to the project's
objectives. Next the paper describes the meetings that have taken place thus
far, and summarizes selected findings to illustrate the value of participatory
action research in addressing the project objectives. These data show that par-
ticipatory action research was an effective tool for encouraging communities
to engage each other but was less effective at encouraging positive individual
and social action (e.g., developing extensive, new, shared initiatives).

2   Context

The research on which this paper is based took place in Toronto, Ontario
among individuals with an interest in church planting (See 4.2 Participants for

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5   Feng Hou, "Spatial Assimilation of Racial Minorities in Canada's Immigrant Gateway Cities."
    Urban Studies 43, no. 7 (2006), pp. 1191–213; Feng Hou and Larry S. Bourne, "The Migration—
    Immigration Link in Canada's Gateway Cities: A Comparative Study of Toronto, Montreal,
    and Vancouver." *Environment & Planning* 38, no. 8 (2006), pp. 1505–26; Lucia Lo, "DiverCity
    Toronto: Canada's Premier Gateway City," in *Migrants to the Metropolis: The Rise of Immigrant
    Gateway Cities*, eds. Marie Price and Lisa Benton-Short (Syracuse, New York: Syracuse Univer-
    sity Press, 2008).
6   The "Golden Horseshoe" is a larger geographic area that encompasses the Greater Toronto
    Area (GTA). For the purposes of this paper we focus on the GTA.

details). The meetings were facilitated by the Tyndale Intercultural Ministry
Centre.

2.1   *Geographic Context: Toronto, Canada*

Canada is an immigrant receiving country. Since the mid-1980s it has devel-
oped a renewed focus on immigration as a solution to population growth con-
cerns based on increasing age and low birth rates.[7] Since that time sources of
immigration have shifted from primarily European countries to a variety of
countries within Asia, Africa, the Caribbean, Central and South America due
to changes in immigration policy.[8] About a quarter of a million immigrants
enter Canada each year and immigration accounts for two thirds of Canada's
population growth.[9] Projected demographic scenarios suggest that, by 2031,
46% of all Canadians aged 15 and older will be foreign-born or have at least
one parent who is foreign born, which is an increase from 39% in 2006.[10]

Immigrants play an even larger role in Toronto, Canada's largest city. More
than one in three Canadian immigrants lived in Toronto in 2006.[11] More than
70% of Toronto residents were either born in a different country, or had at
least one parent who is foreign-born.[12] Toronto immigrants represent over 200
ethnic groups from 169 countries in the 2001 census.[13] In the 2011 census, out of
a population of 5,541,880 in the Toronto Census Metropolitan Area, 2,296,960
spoke a language other than the two official languages (English or French) or

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7   Immigration Canada, *Annual Report to Parliament* (Ottawa: Immigration Canada, 1990).

8   Stephen Castles and Mark J. Miller, *The Age of Migration: International Population Move-
       ments in the Modern World* (New York: Guilford Press, 2009); Robert Murdie and Sutama
       Ghosh, "Does Spatial Concentration Always Mean a Lack of Integration? Exploring Eth-
       nic Concentration and Integration in Toronto." *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 36,
       no. 2 (2010), pp. 293–311.

9   Phillip Carey Connor, *Immigrant Faith: Patterns of Immigrant Religion in the United States,
       Canada, and Western Europe* (New York: New York University Press, 2014); Jim Simmons
       and Larry S. Bourne, *The Canadian Urban System in 2011: Looking Back and Projecting For-
       ward* (Toronto, Ontario: Cities Centre, University of Toronto, 2013).

10   Statistics Canada, "Projections of the Diversity of the Canadian Population: 2006 to 2031."
       The Daily (2010): Accessed Tuesday, October 4, 2016, 2016. http://www.statcan.gc.ca/
       pub/91-551-x/2010001/hl-fs-eng.htm.

11   Myer Siemiatycki, "Governing Immigrant City: Immigrant Political Representation in To-
       ronto." *American Behavioral Scientist* 55, no. 9 (2011), pp. 1214–34.

12   Andrew Heisz, *Canada's Global Cities: Socio-Economic Conditions in Montréal, Toronto and
       Vancouver* (Ottawa: Statistics Canada, 2006).

13   Lo, "DiverCity Toronto."

one of the Aboriginal languages as their mother tongue, and 664,695 regularly spoke a language other than the official or Aboriginal languages at home.[14]

2.2 *Canadian Church Planting*

Congregations are learning to respond to changing immigration patterns in Canada,[15] in part, through the development of new congregations.[16] This planting of immigrant churches is prompting rethinking of practices in the midst of global urbanization.[17] For example, the cultural diversity of these leaders is challenging existing organizations to consider how multicultural inclusion can take place. Churches that are initiated from within populations of recent immigrants affect their local or regional community within the city and maintain (and develop) transnational connections.[18]

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14   Statistics Canada, "Census Profile, Toronto Census Metropolitan Area." (2011): Accessed Friday, October 17, 2014, 2014. www.statcan.gc.ca. Institutional residents are excluded from these numbers. Simmons and Bourne, *The Canadian Urban System in 2011.*

15   David Ley, "The Immigrant Church as an Urban Service Hub." *Urban Studies* 45, no. 10 (2008), p. 2057; Mark Mullins, "The Life-Cycle of Ethnic Churches in Sociological Perspective." *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 14, no. 4 (1987), pp. 321–34; Brian Seim, *Canada's New Harvest: Helping Churches Touch Newcomers; With a Review of the Decade of the 1990s, New Information From the Statistics Canada-1996 Census, a Christian Immigrant Leaders Survey and Reconciliation Principles* (Scarborough, Ontario: SIM Canada in partnership with Vision Canada: 2000 & Beyond, 1999); Enoch Wan, *Missions Within Reach: Intercultural Ministries in Canada* (Hong Kong: China Alliance Press, 1995); James W. Watson, *et al.* "Churches Responding to the Immigrant Reality in Canada." *CUExpo* (2011).

16   Brian Seim, "Reaching the World At Our Doorstep," in *Discipling Our Nation: Equipping the Canadian Church for Its Mission*, ed. Murray Moerman (Delta, British Columbia: Church Leadership Library, 2005); Sam Owusu, "'To All Nations,' the Distinctive Witness of the Intercultural Church," in *Green Shoots Out of Dry Ground: Growing a New Future for the Church in Canada*, ed. John P. Bowen (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf & Stock, 2013); Santos, "What's a Missionary Doing in Canada? The Story of Greenhills Christian Fellowship."

17   Harvie M. Conn, *Planting and Growing Urban Churches: From Dream to Reality* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Publishing Group, 1997); Robert C. Linthicum, "Networking: Hope for the Church in the City," in *Planting and Growing Urban Churches: From Dream to Reality*, ed. Harvie M. Conn (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books, 1997); Harvie M. Conn and Manuel Ortiz, *Urban Ministry: The Kingdom, the City, & the People of God* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2001); Bob Roberts, *Glocalization: How Followers of Christ Engage the New Flat Earth* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2007).

18   Helen Rose Fuchs Ebaugh and Janet Saltzman Chafetz, *Religion Across Borders: Transnational Immigrant Networks* (Walnut Creek, California: AltaMira Press, 2002).

Bringing together leaders from diverse congregations, denominations, and mission organizations that work in this gateway city provides an opportunity for learning and networking. Religious practitioners involved in urban renewal argue that 'networking builds and maintains contacts which will enable those in that network to more effectively carry out ministry to the exploited, to the lost, and the unchurched.'[19] Networking across cultural differences challenges leaders to reflect on their ability to form relationships with each other. It can also identify different cultural interpretations of common interactions among denominational supervisors of church planters and the planters themselves.[20] These activities contribute to both the developing ecclesiology of new churches and prompt older organizations to evaluate their existing ecclesiological perspectives in light of changing contexts and international influence.[21]

This increased awareness of the challenges of church planting among immigrant populations has highlighted the difference between sometimes resource poor NCCP and relatively resource rich denominational organizations and the ecclesial structures of both groups. It was these contrasts and the apparent common objectives that were the impetus for the development of the NCCP project at the Tyndale Intercultural Ministry Centre.

2.3   *Tyndale Intercultural Ministry Centre (TIM)*
The mission of TIM is, 'To act as a catalyst to mobilize the intercultural Christian faith community towards a more intentional and effective engagement in

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19   Linthicum, "Networking," p. 164.
20   T.V. Thomas and Enoch Wan, "What Denominational Leaders Should Know But Have Never Been Told Regarding Intercultural Ministries," in *Missions Within Reach: Intercultural Ministries in Canada* (Hong Kong: China Alliance Press, 1995).
21   Alan Hirsch, *The Forgotten Ways: Reactivating the Missional Church* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Brazos Press, 2006); Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *Introduction to Ecclesiology: Ecumenical, Historical & Global Perspectives* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2002); Jervis David Payne, *Discovering Church Planting: An Introduction to the Whats, Whys, and Hows of Global Church Planting* (Colorado Springs: Paternoster Publishing, 2009); Bob Roberts, *The Multiplying Church: The New Math for Starting New Churches* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2008); Craig Ott and Gene Wilson, *Global Church Planting: Biblical Principles and Best Practices for Multiplication* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2011); Jervis David Payne, *Strangers Next Door: Immigration, Migration and Mission* (Downers Grove, Illinois: IVP Books, 2012); Bob Roberts Jr. "Transformation: How Glocal Churches Transform Lives and the World." (2006), p. 193; Sadiri Joy Tira, ed. *Human Tidal Wave: Global Migration, Megacities, Multiculturalism, Diaspora Missiology* (Manila, Philippines: LifeChange Publications, 2013).

local and global missions.'[22] In the development of the NCCP project multiple
partners were brought together through the work of TIM. TIM is an action-
oriented centre within Tyndale University College & Seminary that had pre-
viously partnered in a study with the Centre for Community Based Research
and World Vision examining the integration of new immigrants into Canadian
congregations.[23] It is actively involved in networking among new Canadian
congregations and established denominations, associations and agencies for
shared learning, ministry partnerships, and training development. Thus TIM
had the ability to convene meetings with both NCCP and DL and the respect to
play a lead role in encouraging conversation and collaboration.

3   Participatory Action Research

The TIM objectives for this project include breaking down isolation between
new Canadian church planters and denominational leaders through collabo-
ration (see above). The aim was that, through conversation, the participants
would share and develop resources and that they would act together for ongo-
ing learning. The participatory aims of the project necessitated a participatory
and collaborative approach to research. This section describes the approach
chosen, how it is applicable to the TIM project, why it was expected to contrib-
ute to practical social action and theoretical knowledge, and explains how it
was applied to collecting data for the project.

3.1   *Description*
Participatory Action Research (PAR) provides a methodological framework
and ideological standards for providing rigor in research that contributes both
to knowledge generation and to social action such as community mobiliza-
tion. Following Bramer and Chapman we define PAR as 'an iterative process
of action, research, and reflection guided by a leader with the participation of
others in the situation to effect positive individual and social change and to

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22   TIM Centre, "What We Do." (2013): Accessed Tuesday, October 4, 2016, 2016. https://www
      .tyndale.ca/tim/services.
23   Watson, *et al.*, "Churches Responding to the Immigrant Reality in Canada"; Janzen, Chapman
      and Watson, "Integrating Immigrants Into the Life of Canadian Urban Christian Con-
      gregations." See also http://www.communitybasedresearch.ca/Page/View/Churches
      _Responding_to_the_Immig and http://www.ureachtoronto.com/content/role-churches
      -immigrant-settlement-and-integration-toronto-site.

develop transferable and theoretical knowledge.'[24] A growing body of literature explores how organizations can study themselves using PAR.[25] PAR has proved effective at contributing to the work of religious groups.[26] Furthermore, participatory action research has been used extensively for cross-organizational studies.[27] PAR's approach is compatible with the desired outcomes of the TIM project and its basic parameters were already familiar to the researchers from previous projects.[28]

3.2   *Participatory Action Research as Ecclesial Practice*
In addition to meeting the research objectives of this project PAR is participatory and collaborative so that all actors' input is recognized as valuable and thus can serve as both research method and ecclesial practice. Thus, the praxis of participation must take into account practical measures for conducting research that allow for participant input into design, analysis, and generation of capacity for action that can sustain change in the context.[29] Encouraging

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24   Paul Bramer and Mark D. Chapman, "Action Research as an Organizing Paradigm for Doctor of Ministry Research." *Association of Doctor of Ministry Educators Annual Meeting* (2011), See also Davydd James Greenwood and Morten Levin, *Introduction to Action Research: Social Research for Social Change* (Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications, 1998). p. xxv. For a history of participatory action research see Stephen Kemmis and Robin McTaggart, Norman K. Denzin, and Yvonna S. Lincoln, "Participatory Action Research: Communicative Action and the Public Sphere," in *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research* (Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications, Inc, 2005).

25   Mary Brydon-Miller, Davydd Greenwood and Patricia Maguire, "Why Action Research?" *Action Research* 1, no. 1 (2003), pp. 9–28; David Coghlan and Teresa Brannick, *Doing Action Research in Your Own Organization* (London: SAGE, 2009); Davydd J Greenwood, William Foote Whyte and Ira Harkavy, "Participatory Action Research as a Process and as a Goal." *Human Relations* 46, no. 2 (1993), pp. 175–92; Jean McNiff, *Action Research for Professional Development: Concise Advice for New Action Researchers* (2002); Ernest T. Stringer, *Action Research, 4th Edition* (Los Angeles, California: Sage Publications, 2014); Ortun Zuber-Skerritt and Chad Perry, "Action Research Within Organizations and University Thesis Writing." *The Learning Organization* 9, no. 4 (2002), pp. 171–79.

26   Elizabeth Conde-Frazier, "Participatory Action Research: Practical Theology for Social Justice." *Religious Education* 101, no. 3 (2006), pp. 321–29; Cameron Harder, *Discovering the Other: Asset-Based Approaches for Building Community Together* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2013); Edward Prebble, "Invigorating the Church for Mission: Action Research With Local Parishes," (Phd diss., University of Waikato, 2012).

27   Janzen, Chapman and Watson, "Integrating Immigrants Into the Life of Canadian Urban Christian Congregations."

28   Ibid.

29   Hilary Bradbury Huang, "What is Good Action Research?" *Action Research* 8, no. 1 (2010), pp. 93–109.

continued involvement comes through relevance to the community being engaged in research and equitable participation of representatives of that community in the research process.[30] This is a necessary feature of PAR because it addresses the critique that, 'the principal investigator can passively be an agent for powers interested in managing the community.'[31] Repeating cycles of data collection and testing in the research process further refine the understanding of key issues and points to better methods for engaging participants which builds a shared sense of ownership in the outcomes. A repeated participatory approach to research responds to the concern that PAR lacks rigour because it can show change over time and obtains participant confirmation of the social change goals of the research.[32] Engagement by participants in the research process can ensure false assumptions are corrected early and themes from the data analysis receive feedback on their perceived representativeness. In this way theory can be inductively derived through observation of the whole process. Participatory action research includes a reflective process which supports understanding of opportunities and challenges from all sides. It is active so that the project results in some defined action outcomes. Furthermore, participatory action research can be used with minimal effort over longer periods of time so that relational patterns can be established for the purpose of changing the operating conditions of all the participants.[33]

3.3   *Application to This Project*

Following the guidelines of participatory action research iterative cycles of observing the different contexts, planning next steps, implementing actions, and reflecting on outcomes were implemented throughout the project.

TIM provided collaborative dialogue opportunities for DL and NCCP separately and together. Each session invited feedback on the value of the dialogue and potential next steps, recorded and analysed notes on the dialogue and

30   Joanna Ochocka and Rich Janzen, "Breathing Life Into Theory: Illustrations of Community-Based Research: Hallmarks, Functions and Phases." *Gateways: International Journal of Community Research and Engagement* 7 (2014), pp. 18–33; Joanna Ochocka, Elin Moorlag and Rich Janzen, "A Framework for Entry: PAR Values and Engagement Strategies in Community Research." *Gateways: International Journal of Community Research and Engagement* 3 (2010), pp. x–xx.

31   Rebecca S. Hagey, "Guest Editorial: The Use and Abuse of Participatory Action Research." *Chronic Diseases in Canada* 18, no. 1 (1997), pp. 1–4.

32   Mary J. Melrose, "Maximizing the Rigor of Action Research: Why Would You Want to? How Could You?" *Field Methods* 13, no. 2 (2001), pp. 160–80.

33   Bjorn Gustavsen, "From Experiments to Network Building: Trends in the Use of Research for Reconstructing Working Life." *Human Relations* 51, no. 3 (1998), pp. 431–48.

feedback, and developed a report for distribution as a basis for future dialogue. The objective was to encourage the group to collaboratively decide on and plan action steps, implement actions steps, and invite other communities into the dialogue.

4   The Project

This section describes the TIM project including, the project team, the research participants, data sources, how data was collected and the TIM approach to analysis.

4.1   Research Team

The TIM team that facilitated the project and collected these data was a working group of six. The working group was multi-ethnic, multi-denominational, multi-vocational (academics and church representatives), and included both genders. Members of the team had varying roles external to their participation in this project including as participants in church plants, educators, students, and a denominational staff person with responsibility for church planting.

4.2   Participants

The research participants were also diverse. The two main categories of participants were those involved in denominations which support church planters and new Canadians who have expressed interest in, or are already involved in, church planting. Participants self-identified the category to which they belonged. Of those who provided the information over 75% of them had planted a church in the last 5 years or planned to plant a church in the near future. Most were residents of southwestern Ontario. Diverse ethnic and cultural groups were represented among the new Canadian church planters whereas most of the denominational leader participants were Canadians of European descent. At one event 18 different mother tongue languages were represented (including Russian, Swahili, Kataho, Punjabi, and Kudhio). Both men and women were represented but over 90% of participants were men. Finally, representatives from over a dozen different denominational groups and religious organizations participated. While there were representatives from mainline denominations (e.g., United Church of Canada, Anglican Church of Canada) the majority of denominations participating were from evangelical traditions (e.g., Baptists, The Christian and Missionary Alliance, Christian Reformed Church, Pentecostal).

4.3   *Data Sources*

This paper is based on six meetings held between November 2011 and August 2014. Following four meetings which collected data about their general relationship and main concerns, two additional meetings engaged these groups in conversations about next steps and potential actions. The first meeting introduced the project and started the initial conversation. The second meeting began with a DL making a presentation to NCCP and a NCCP making a presentation to DL. This was followed by a discussion of what each group would like to tell the other. Subsequent meetings used a summary of the previous meeting as a guideline for additional conversation. This was supplemented with stories from individual NCCP or DL. The agenda of each subsequent meeting was determined based on the data collected at the previous meeting. The remaining two meetings to discuss next steps and potential actions included both groups with an emphasis on NCCP at the second of these.

At each meeting there were up to four sources of data: table groups which operated as casual, semi-structured focus groups; researcher participant-observations; whole group discussions; and meeting response surveys. Each meeting began with a presentation. This was followed by facilitated discussion in table groups. While the facilitators did try to focus participants' discussion on previous findings, the conversation was allowed to develop in whichever direction the participants thought valuable. Volunteers were asked to record the discussion at each table and during the whole group discussions; each group was also given large sheets of paper on which they could write their notes. Both table group volunteer facilitators and the researchers wrote down and submitted their observations of the event after each meeting. Response surveys were distributed on paper (detail about the data sets is provided below).

These data were not collected by professional researchers for the purpose of academic publication, rather, they were collected by ministry practitioners for TIM purposes. As such the collection of data is less systematic and more informal than settings in which academic publication is the primary goal. Nonetheless, the participants were informed of the purposes of the research which included the 'dissemination of ongoing learning' and were made aware of prior and forthcoming reports and publications. They were also informed that some of the collected data would be analyzed and distributed external to the forums. No individuals were obligated to participate and anyone was free to leave or not participate at any point. The intention that these data would be collectively compiled and used for the benefit of the community was communicated verbally. Participants consented verbally and/or by signing a consent form to these conditions and by their ongoing involvement in the forums.

When forums included a written feedback form additional written permission to include these data were obtained.[34]

4.4 *Approach to Coding and Analysis*

These data include some descriptive statistics but primarily consists of qualitative group and individual comments. Data from the first two meetings were analysed using a deductive coding approach, which looked for evidence of themes that spoke to the research objectives of the project in regards to the experiences of the participants.[35] However, these data were also analysed inductively looking for unexpected themes and ideas. As the research team included both experienced and novice researchers it chose to focus on large thematic units rather than smaller details.[36] While attentive to emergent themes, the focus was on comparison and contrast between the two different groups of research participants. This approach to coding was compatible with the variety of individuals involved with various levels of skill related to research analysis.

Observations were sometimes mixed with reflections in the discussion but were identified separately in recorded notes. The research team conducted coding both individually and collaboratively. Results of the analysis were presented to the research team and to research participants for comment and verification that the results matched their experiences. Participants verified themes as they developed and extended the conversation, and thus the research, at each new event.

The first four exploratory meetings with research participants took place over a 13-month period. The objective of these meetings was to help NCCP and DL understand each other and collaboratively develop common actions of mutual benefit. As such the questions, though influenced by the researchers, were primarily guided by the concerns of TIM and the meeting participants. The objective of the meetings was to facilitate discussion towards the project objectives rather than to answer specific research questions.

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34   It is reasonable to conclude that using these data in this paper for secondary data analysis was included in their initial consent. All identifying information has been removed and individual and organizational identities have been kept confidential in all public communication. The Tyndale University College & Seminary Research Ethics Board approved the use of these data.

35   Stringer, *Action Research, 4th Edition.* pp. 14, 31.

36   Sometimes called holistic coding cf. Johnny Saldaña, *The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers* (Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications Ltd, 2009). pp. 118–119, 205.

The four initial meetings produced ten different data sets which include notes on group discussions, feedback surveys, table group poster notes, session leader board notes and participant photos. All these data were divided into 249 units of meaning. The six members of the working group coded these data into nine themes individually and at two meetings of the working group.

The nine themes and their inductively derived definitions can be seen in Table 1 in order of frequency.[37] The observations of the researcher team and subsequent feedback from research participants indicated that these themes capture the major concerns of NCCP and DL in respect to the starting of new churches.

The second set of meetings was analysed more deductively. The objective of these meetings was to get participants to provide feedback on how well the presented data (see above) matched their experience, to identify their

TABLE 1   *Themes (by frequency)*[38]

Theme	Definition
Resources	Expertise, space, money, physical support, personnel, etc.
Relationships	How and why individuals & organizations are connected
Ministry Understanding	How ministry should be done
Cultural understanding	How things are done in other cultural contexts
Changing Context	The context in which we operate has changed and is changing
Multiple Cultures	Operating in the same geographical/organizational space
Assessment	How we judge the competency of partners/workers
Global Connections	Significant connections to other geographical contexts
Communication	Interaction between individuals or groups

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37 Frequency is one criterion to evaluate interest but in itself is insufficient to identify priorities.

38 Two themes initially identified as valuable were subsumed into other categories that better captured the development of the conversation (Global connections into Changing Context, Communication into Relationships). As some of the initial data was coded into these categories they have been left in the table but were not analyzed separately. This has been indicated in the table using faded text.

concerns from the data, and to choose next steps to address each need. As such the data also took into account areas and concerns identified by participants. One member of the research team coded these data. A different member of the team read the original data to look for themes that rose inductively from these data. Both analyses were compared and then verified with the rest of the research team and with research participants.

The TIM research team reviewed the findings, compared the outcomes to the TIM project objectives, and looked for the role of participatory action research in those outcomes.

5   Findings: Themes from the Conversations

This section reports on the findings from the four exploratory meetings and the two subsequent next steps meetings to illustrate how participatory action research addresses the project objectives. It also identifies the main themes that result from the analysis of the first four meetings, provides some examples of similarities and differences among NCCP and DL, and reviews the final two meetings for seeds of positive social action.

5.1   *Exploratory Meetings*
These four meetings addressed the reduction of isolation, collaboration, and resource identification objectives of the project. Reports of previous meetings addressed the knowledge dissemination objectives of the project but were addressed in a more specific way in two subsequent next steps meetings (see below). These additional meetings aimed to move positive social action beyond the TIM organized meetings.

5.1.1   Resources
Resources and relationships were the most common themes in these discussions and the two are closely connected together. Resources do not flow between groups that do not have either a structural or a trust based relationship. Groups that have resources need some way to find and evaluate groups that need resources. Both groups expressed frustration that resource sharing was not happening as effectively as it should.

Most of the resources mentioned had to do with the needs of operating. These include not just ministry-focused resources such as expertise, information, and education of primary concern to DL but the practical needs of salary, physical space, employment, and funding that were commonly mentioned by NCCP.

5.1.2   Relationships

The theme of relationships was second only to resources as the most prevalent
theme of the study. Both groups acknowledged concerns about bridging gaps
across ethnicity, generations, cultures, and denominations. Access to resources
(e.g., training, salaries, basic needs) was identified as a relational barrier but
the main relational concerns related to the building of relationships them-
selves. Even relationships within the same ethnic group and denominational
family were identified as needing more attention.

    Mentoring relationships were mentioned often, both because of a desire to
be mentored and because of an awareness that few structures exist to provide
that mentoring among new Canadians or among denominations. While the
project aimed to foster collaborative relationships we heard a lot of concern
about their lack or, if they existed, the limits and problems with those rela-
tionships. DL and NCCP had different perspectives on what constituted a good
relationship with NCCP favouring more time and intensive contact.

5.1.3   Ministry Understanding

Church planting is changing in the GTA. This is both the result of changing
understandings of ministry that shift thinking to an outward looking, relation-
al approach to ministry and a result of rapid shifts in the cultural makeup of
the region. Other emphases in the data included modelling what people want
to produce, the increased youthfulness of the culture and the need for open-
ness to change. Few argued for continuing to do what they are currently do-
ing. There was not complete agreement on what should be done next with the
exception that whatever happens should be more relational. There was only
a small amount of evidence that NCCP and DL treated these forums as an op-
portunity to develop these relationships and to share resources.

5.1.4   Cultural Understanding

DL and NCCP have a similar experience when trying to work together. They
discover differences in cultural understandings. Approaches to leadership,
theological expectations, credentialing, the type of training needed, and how
ministry should be approached were among the areas of frustration for both
NCCP and DL.

    However, frustrations were not necessarily about the same things and often
had to do with hopes and expectations that were highly contextual or situation
dependent. A European missionary to Canada was frustrated that his chosen
denomination did not facilitate ministry to his own people group whereas a
South American missionary to Canada was frustrated that he was expected to
concentrate exclusively on his own people group.

5.1.5   Changing Context

The global flow of people plays a role in cultural understandings and changing contexts.[39] It explains some of the differences of opinions over relationships and assessments and it is the source of much of the resource and assessment need. Participants recognized the rising cultural diversity of their contexts and the way in which NCCP can be key to engaging these contexts. Both groups are concerned about the changing structures of the Canadian Revenue Agency's regulations of charities and how to navigate these rules. They also share a concern for retaining their children in the church. Such shared concerns reduced isolation and pointed to opportunities for collaboration.

5.1.6   Multiple Cultures

With diversity comes tension regarding the appropriateness of monocultural churches in an intercultural culture with some suggestion that monocultural churches do a better job serving new immigrants than intercultural churches. However, there is also a perception that monocultural churches rarely become intercultural even though there is evidence that some churches become more multicultural as they age.

There was tension over which aspects of ethnic identity can or should be maintained over time and what, if any, amount of assimilation should be pursued making issues related to reducing isolation hard to address. These concerns resurfaced in the final action oriented meetings.

5.1.7   Assessment

The question of resources leads to the question of how to assess who should receive those resources. Neither NCCP nor DL were fully satisfied with the current state of assessment. Existing models and structures are not adequately serving either group but there is no agreement on how to move forward.

Without understanding the cross-cultural complications potentially affecting screening structures typically used in Canada, organizations are uncertain how to evaluate potential NCCP partners. Furthermore, the practical demands on the two groups are different which can make basic logistics challenging. For example, many NCCP are bi-vocational and thus unable to meet during the week. However, many DL work primarily Monday through Friday. TIM tried to solve this problem by alternating between midweek and weekend meetings.

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39   Manuel Castells, *The Rise of the Network Society, the Information Age: Economy, Society and Culture, Vol. I* (Oxford, UK: Blackwell, 1996).

5.1.8   Summary
DL recognized and wanted to benefit from the passion the NCCP bring to the
task of church planting. They both recognized that NCCP and DL had different
concerns. Conversations included how to bring the groups together, how to ad-
dress misunderstandings and how to cooperate towards practical social action.

    NCCP share the DL interest in cross-cultural ministry but are sometimes
frustrated with their relationships with denominations. There are questions
about what denominations can and will provide and what denominations will
expect in return for those resources. In particular NCCP are looking for men-
tors that can help them navigate the Canadian cultural and regulatory environ-
ment. They also would like to know why their churches are considered to be
different than other more traditional approaches to church planting.

    From the perspective of the TIM project objectives participatory action re-
search helped to reduce isolation between and among groups, limited collabo-
ration took place at the TIM organized meetings, TIM played some role as a
resource provider in that it connected these groups together, and the project
was successful at distributing learning from the conversations to the NCCP and
DL who attended the events.

    The final two meetings were intended to develop these initial successes into
positive social action manifest in action outside the TIM organized meetings.

5.2   *Next Step Meetings: Collective Concerns and Action Plans*
Having explored and analysed the data from the first four events these data
were presented to NCCP and DL at two additional events. At the first event
they were asked to discuss the presented data and decide which issues and
themes were of primary concern to them. They identified four primary issues:
the value of friendship, the need for training, the need for some way to share
and find resources, and the struggle of running a church for multiple genera-
tions. This section describes what participants said about each of these issues
and what they identified as next steps to address them.[40] It also reports on the
degree to which these final meetings led to the positive social action that was
the TIM project's objectives.

5.2.1   Developing Friendships
Participants, particularly NCCP, differentiate between 'professional relation-
ships' and 'friendships.' This was sometimes a reference to the new immigrant

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40   These comments were developed in self-selected discussion groups and thus are not nec-
      essarily representative of all the participants.

experience of loneliness on arrival in Canada. At other times it was a reference to the more instrumental approach to relationships and personal contact common within Canadian denominational culture. Participants talked about building 'relationships informally,' getting to 'know each other, pray, and cooperate,' the need for 'genuine relationship,' and the 'gift of hospitality' as elements of friendship. They were looking for friendships rather than partnerships and were concerned that this was not taking place.

The bi-vocational reality and status as immigrants of NCCP means that time constraints influence how they can obtain training and how they prefer to relate to partners in ministry. Most prominently NCCP prefer to engage colleagues through friendships. It is through friendships that they hope to access resources, get trained and engage multiple generations in their churches. What they have found is that Canadian culture and denominational structures are not set up to get things done relationally. DL are showing signs that they understand this need—even if they are not currently able to operate consistently in this manner. While few plans developed at the time, friendships were formed and several church planters were introduced to DL that could potentially provide needed resources, reduce isolation, and lead to later collaboration.

5.2.2   Obtaining and Providing Training

The discussion of training had less to do with the content of the training than with the need for training and issues related to obtaining that training. The content issues that surfaced were the need for training on 'understanding different cultures' and the desire for resources that focused on a Canadian context. What kind of training was desired varied but the most often mentioned approach to training was through a mentoring or advising relationship. There was little discussion of existing training options already available—including low cost options provided by some of the denominational and mission agency participants and by TIM itself.

5.2.3   Sharing Resources

Conversation about how to share resources moved to a discussion of a database to provide access to those resources. Suggested content included awareness of what others were doing, who was doing it and where they were doing it. This information was desired for educational and networking purposes. Other conversations focused on access to resources including finances, ministry training, pastoral aids and practical help (e.g., finding facilities or help navigating Canadian culture).

Participants thought that TIM should provide a platform for resource shar-
ing. However, participants provided few suggestions for collective social action
among conversation partners other than in-meeting networking and informa-
tion sharing. There was some reference to the TIM maintained site UReachTo-
ronto.ca which accomplishes some of these goals.

5.2.4   Working Cross Generationally

The issue of the relationship between first and second-generation immigrants
was brought up repeatedly.[41] The tension was identified as related to immigrat-
ing to Canada as compared to being born in Canada but was also understood
as related to age, language, cultural expectations, and approaches to authority.
There was also some characterization of the differences between these genera-
tions and much lamenting but few suggestions on how to address the problem
other than to be more open to change.

5.2.5   Summary of Participatory Action Research and Positive
             Social Action

The project aimed to break down isolation and disseminate learning among
NCCP and DL by, for example, making them aware of their mutual concerns
and differences. However, it also aimed to get them working together collab-
oratively and to increase awareness of TIM provided resources. With a few iso-
lated exceptions, collaboration only extended to talking about the potential of
collaboration. Interest was maintained, NCCP and DL came to a better mutual
awareness and understanding of each other, networking took place and some
seeds of common action were planted (e.g., networking, church planter de-
velopment, education). Yet, the objective of presenting TIM as a resource had
mixed success with participants aware of some TIM resources and not others.
Little positive social action took place outside of the TIM organized meetings.

Thus, participatory action research was effective at identifying need and
helping to narrow down the field of concern but did not, at this point, lead to
much actual social action or even provide access to existing responses to some
of the concerns identified.

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41   cf. Paul G. Hiebert and Eloise Hiebert Meneses, *Incarnational Ministry: Planting Churches
        in Band, Tribal, Peasant, and Urban Societies* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books, 1995).
        pp. 335–36; Payne, *Strangers Next Door: Immigration, Migration and Mission*. pp. 133–34;
        Steven Ybarrola, "Diasporas & Multiculturalism: Social Ideologies, Liminality, and Cul-
        tural Identity," in *Human Tidal Wave: Global Migration, Megacities, Multiculturalism, Dias-
        pora Missiology*, ed. Sadiri Joy Tira (Manila, Philippines: LifeChange Publications, 2013).

6   Discussion

This section summarizes the findings, reflects practically and theologically on these findings, provides a critical assessment of the project, and suggests some steps for further research.

6.1   *Summary of Findings*
The findings demonstrate progress toward accomplishing the four project objectives: reducing isolation, encouraging collaboration, increasing awareness of resources, and disseminating learning.

6.1.1   Reduce Isolation
The use of participatory action research was intended to bring NCCP and DL together for external action and thus to reduce isolation. However, the meetings themselves had an unanticipated positive role in reducing isolation among NCCP on their own. More so than the DL, NCCP participants adopted the meetings as networking and mutual support events. They expressed a strong desire to pray together and were appreciative when opportunity for prayer was built into subsequent meetings. DL noticed this and one group approached TIM to fund additional meetings to support and resource NCCP.

6.1.2   Collaboration
Participatory action research did not lead to the anticipated larger areas of cooperation between participants and the development of collaborative relationships because of the non-directive nature of the process used (see below). However, individual NCCP and individual DL did use the meetings as opportunities to get to know each other and some longer-term relationships and support structures were established that extended outside of the meetings.

6.1.3   Awareness of Resources
Participatory action research as a tool for increasing awareness of TIM resources has a more ambivalent outcome. On the one hand TIM was facilitating the meetings and in that regard participants were made aware of TIM resources. However, as implemented, participatory action research was non-directive in guiding conversation—much of which took place in self-directed table groups—and thus did not specifically introduce TIM resources into the conversation. In these situations awareness of TIM resources depended on participants' individual awareness and their introduction of what they knew into the conversation.

6.1.4   Disseminate Learning

Participatory action research was effective for disseminating ongoing learn-
ing. The need to get feedback from participants about the analysis of the
previous meeting led to regular communication of learning from previous
meetings. Both NCCP and DL expressed appreciation for the information
communicated—even though it all came from them in the first place. In
part, it appears that both groups appreciated learning where they had shared
concerns and where they had different concerns. Internally to NCCP and DL
conversations there was an opportunity to talk with others who shared one's
own position and challenges.

6.2   *Practical and Theological Reflections*

This paper is intended to be primarily pragmatic in the promotion of further
ministry rather than a theological exploration. However, participant com-
ments were steeped in biblical and theological assumptions. These assump-
tions had roots in their different cultural and theological contexts but also had
many areas of agreement. They both valued the biblical priority of relation-
ships (1 John 4:8, 1 Corinthians 13:12) and the value of the shared Christian life
(John 12:21). Yet, as the findings show they came to different normative conclu-
sions about how these biblical values should be applied to actual practice. This
is understandable given that culture shapes interpersonal activity and there
were many different cultural values represented by the participants. Indeed
different sets of assumed theological norms are having to adapt to the chang-
ing environment of Canadian church planting that is increasingly prioritizing
a contextual approach to theology and action.[42]

Further, many of the themes identified in the findings parallel biblical
themes. For example, 'cultural understanding' is part of the ongoing process
of providing opportunities for the development of intercultural competence
within broader church structures. Biblical stories of the appointment of dea-
cons (Acts 6) and the council of Jerusalem (Acts 15) point to processes involved
in recognizing the value of fellow Christians across 'multiple cultures.' Like-
wise, themes of 'relationship,' and 'resources' in the findings resonate with
partnerships of leaders described through the missionary expansion described

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42   Harder, *Discovering the Other: Asset-Based Approaches for Building Community Together*;
       Leonard Hjalmarson, ed. *Text & Context: Church Planting in Canada in Post-Christendom*
       (Portland, OR: Urban Loft Publishers, 2013); James Watson, "Contextualization and Inter-
       action Mapping." *The Exchange: A Blog by Ed Stezer* Christianity Today (2015): Accessed
       Tuesday, October 6, 2015, http://www.christianitytoday.com/edstetzer/2015/october/
       contextualization-and-interaction-mapping.html.

in Acts. For example, the Pauline epistles contain invitations to shared ministry opportunities (Romans 15:23–33). These examples and their contemporary equivalents touch on issues of unity in relationship and purpose across what could naturally be cultural dividing lines. The effectiveness of the processes of understanding and shared action carry theological significance in that they enable both NCCP and DL to fulfil their ministry objectives.[43]

6.3 Critical Assessment: Impediments to and Limits of Participatory Action Research in Promoting Positive Social Action

All four of the project objectives aimed towards promoting positive social action but had varied degrees of success. Some of the impediments to positive social action relate to the different contexts of the two groups. Other impediments to common action included little familiarity with cross-organizational cooperation, disagreement on assessment of qualifications, differences of opinion on resource priorities, and a tendency to focus on large conceptual issues at the expense of actionable tasks. This section provides a critical assessment of the value of participatory action research (PAR) for these purposes. Limits of PAR as implemented, for encouraging positive social action include: the non-directive nature of the project, the lack of designated leadership responsibilities, differences among groups, and differences of opinions about priorities.

   The project did not have specific action goals. Fuzzy objectives contributed to the production of fuzzy outcomes. The process was designed to be collaborative and non-hierarchical so that normal hierarchies of wealth, cultural or language proficiency and position did not negatively affect conversation and collaboration. This appears to have been accomplished. However, a side effect of this decision was that no one was identified as a leader and empowered to lead specific actions. While PAR is often used with groups from multiple organizations, in this case, the multiplicity of organizations with different priorities and means of allocating resources led to a lack of ownership over specific actions. Participants could agree broadly on things that needed to be done but rarely came to a conclusion on who should do it. Working with multiple actors avoided the perceived weakness that PAR favours stability over change[44] but

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43   Mark Lau Branson and Juan Francisco Martínez, *Churches, Cultures & Leadership: A Practical Theology of Congregations and Ethnicities* (Downers Grove, Illinois: IVP Academic, 2011); Dan Sheffield, *The Multicultural Leader: Developing a Catholic Personality, Second Edition* (Toronto: Clements Publishing Group Inc., 2015).

44   Rebecca S. Hagey. "Guest Editorial: The Use and Abuse of Participatory Action Research."

resulted in participant tendency towards change without the organizational strength to implement it by the participants. Evaluative process for sorting of priorities and assigning lead individuals or organizations to address these priorities could have been intentionally implemented within the PAR process rather than assuming eventual emergence of these outcomes.

Thus, there was often common agreement that something was important but no common agreement about the details of what that something was or what to do about it and consequently the group had no clear path on how to come to agreement. The issue of relationships between NCCP and DL is an illustrative example. What does it mean for a NCCP to have a relationship with a denominational group? Does it mean that they become part of the administrative structure? That they get mentored or have other kinds of one-on-one relationships? That they get financial and other resources? Conversely, what does it mean for a denomination and its leaders to have a relationship with a new Canadian church planter? Does it mean that assessment of ministry suitability becomes messier? That more personal contact time is required? That approaches to ministry that don't follow current patterns need to be explored? More attention on specific issues raised by the process is required.

6.4   *Further Research*

Participatory action research has roots in the contextual pedagogy of Paulo Freire and our work is influenced by contextual theology and the application of PAR to the practical theological task of community building.[45] Given this background and our findings our hope is that further discussions with NCCP could manifest in a contextual theology for their activity in Canada so that the assumptions that are brought to the church planting tasked are derived in part from the immigrant experience. This contextual theology could aid in answering questions such as, what does our work tell us about the task of community building between NCCP and DL? We know that their occupational and life circumstances can make relationship building challenging but there is good will on both sides that could be leveraged for mutually beneficial actions. How then can NCCP and DL cooperate to understand what shared local theology looks like in a rapidly changing gateway city such as Toronto?

Further research may be necessary to explore how participation can be combined with more directive approaches to cooperation and why NCCP and

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45   Conde-Frazier, "Participatory Action Research: Practical Theology for Social Justice"; Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (New York: Continuum, 2000).

DL have not consistently cooperated on areas of common concern and mutual benefit even when they are aware of them. Case studies of effective cooperation could provide models for such engagement. Such projects could benefit from the identification of organizations with resources and time to develop and implement participants' identified projects.

Finally, this project did not explore the constraints, if any, of their theological differences and organization policies which have sometimes restricted organizational cooperation. Do these different groups have sufficient similarities to effectively work together? Do the organizational structures of the denominations allow for more opportunistic and ad hoc partnerships? Do the time and resource constraints of NCCP give them sufficient margin for cooperative ministry?

TIM itself continues to work with these groups in both more specific ministry foci (e.g., Muslim ministry, African ministry) and on issues of large organizational concern (e.g., education, networking). It is our expectation that some of these questions will be worked out as the ministry develops.

6.5   *Summary*

While participatory action research has potential in a multicultural, multi-organizational context its outcomes depend on the stated objectives of the project, how the process is directed, and the people in the room. Breaking down isolation between groups, collaborative actions, some awareness of TIM resources, and disseminating learning were natural outcomes of the participatory action research process. Yet, only limited positive social action outside of the TIM meetings developed because there was no direct way to get there in the absence of a specific, shared goal or clearly identified leadership. Furthermore, in accomplishing reduced isolation a non-hierarchical environment was created that may have made it harder to move to additional social action.