"I HAVE A NEW LIFE. EVERYTHING IS NEW.": EXPLORING THE EXPERIENCES OF NEWCOMER CHILDREN IN SCHOOL THROUGH COUNTERSTORIES

by

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A thesis submitted to the Graduate Program in Education

In conformity with the requirements for

the degree of Master of Education

Queen's University

Kingston, Ontario, Canada

(June, 2023)

Abstract

Canadian schools have seen dramatic increases in the number of newcomer students with even greater growth projected in the coming decades (People for Education, 2019). Statistics Canada (2019) projects newcomer children could represent between 39% and 49% of the total population of children by 2036. Considering the rise of this student population within Canadian schools, there has been increased interest among educational researchers to learn more about their acculturation experiences and to examine the factors that affect inclusion. However, the voice of newcomer students has largely remained absent in the research literature. Research surrounding newcomers has tended to emphasize the challenges that these students face, perpetuating a deficit-oriented narrative that views these students in problem-oriented ways. Additionally, this emphasis on barriers is thought to be indicative of the lack of in-school supports (Oikonomidoy et al., 2019), and critics agree that Canadian schools continue to fail in meeting the needs of these students (Dei, 2015; Khalifa et al., 2016). As such, the purpose of this research was twofold in which this study sought to understand (1) what the experience of acculturation is like for newcomer children attending school in Canada and (2) the factors that hinder and support their resiliency. Grounded in Critical Race Theory, counterstories are a tool for challenging and unravelling the myths of dominant discourses by putting forth a more accurate depiction of one's lived reality (Delgado, 1989). The purpose of this qualitative study was to gain insight into the lived experiences of newcomer students adapting to school in Canada. Using a multiple perspective case study approach, five participants aged 7-13 participated in semi-structured interviews. Findings from this study provided unique first-hand insight into the experiences of newcomer children in Canadian public schools. Additionally, the data illuminated the resilience

of these students and the ways in which they persevered to adapt positively within their new environments, despite the looming presence of risk factors that threatened their adaptation.

Keywords: newcomers, acculturation, immigration, child immigrant, resilience, school, supports

Acknowledgements

I am deeply indebted to my supervisor, Dr. Alana Butler, for providing me with unwavering support and reassurance, redirecting me when my thoughts were scattered and I found myself adrift. This endeavour would also not have been possible without my committee member, Dr. Pamela Beach. I express my deepest appreciation for your invaluable guidance and mentorship. Your expertise and commitment to excellence made a profound impact on my work. I want to thank my family for their support, not only through this endeavor but in everything I do. In moments of self-doubt, your unwavering belief in me has been a constant source of strength. I'd also like to give a special thanks to my two loyal companions and steadfast allies, AJ and Pete. Throughout countless long and seemingly endless days and nights, you provided me with solace. Thank you for reminding me that I was never alone. To the five participants in this study, words cannot express my gratitude. Hearing your stories moved me to tears. I am in awe of your strength.

I dedicate this thesis to my nagypapa (grandfather), Dr. Alex Nagy. My nagypapa came to Canada as a refugee, fleeing Budapest during the Hungarian revolution. For my last project as part of my Bachelor of Fine Arts degree, I decided to interview him about his experiences and film our conversations. Over the course of several days, he shared with me stories of experiencing unimaginable trauma, being separated from his family, and dealing with the immense challenges of starting over again in a new and unfamiliar place. Through it all, he persisted. His strength and courage was remarkable. He led a life of service to others, overcoming insurmountable barriers to fulfil his dream of becoming a surgeon. As I conducted this research and listened to my participants' stories, I thought of him often. Sadly, he passed away shortly before I was able to complete my report. He taught me invaluable lessons about resilience and hope, and for that I will be forever grateful.

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List of Abbreviations

Critical Race Theory—CRT

Critically Responsive Pedagogy—CRP

English language learners—ELLs

English as a second language—ESL

Chapter 1

Introduction

In my first teaching placement as part of my Bachelor of Education program, I was placed with a grade one class in an elementary school in my hometown of Mississauga, Ontario. The school was similar to the one I had attended as a child in which the school had a very high population of English language learners and newcomer students. One student in the class had moved to Canada from Syria with her family just two weeks before the start of my placement. The transition to her new school was challenging for her, and the language barrier between her and her teachers and classmates was often insurmountable. As a teacher candidate, I was assigned to work closely with her and I tried my best to provide her with support. After a few weeks had gone by, she began to slip me drawings throughout the day. I came to realize that the drawings she made seemed to reflect how she was feeling. She drew flowers and rainbows when she was happy. She drew her family when she was lonely. She drew herself crying when she was sad.

As time went on, this student began looking for opportunities to help around her classroom and socialize with her classmates. She observed her classmates diligently and strived to learn all the classroom routines. She happily performed classroom jobs and was determined to complete her work, asking for help in her own unique ways. She eagerly sat at the front of the carpet during lessons and story time, listening with noticeable focus and attention. Her delight was undeniable when she joined the class for dance breaks, as her face would light up with a smile. She began to acquire more English and was eager to tell us about herself and her family. I was in awe of the ways in which the child, at such a young age, continued to look for ways to

integrate herself within the school community all while being largely unable to communicate with her peers. This student was one of many linguistically diverse newcomers within the school, and I saw the same acts of determination and resiliency among many other students on a daily basis. This experience motivated me to pursue a Master of Education and learn more about how newcomer students navigate their way through periods of such significant change and adjustment. When I approached this topic as I began my graduate studies, I found myself framing the newcomer experience as one in which the difficulties and challenges seemed so profound, I assumed that newcomer children must be experiencing a significant toll on their growth and development. However, this wasn't what I had witnessed for myself, so I was left unsure about how this assumption of mine came to be. This experience led me to reflect upon my positionality, and to therefore realize my (in)ability to relate to my students' lived experiences. I experienced firsthand how deficit-frameworks can take hold, permeating our system of beliefs and affecting how we view our students. I undertook this work in an attempt to do better.

Context

In 1971, Canada became the first country to adopt a federal multiculturalism policy under the leadership of Prime Minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau. This policy sought to reject the notion of cultural assimilation, or "melting pot", by acknowledging the wide variety and intrinsic value of Canadian citizens' cultural backgrounds (Jedwab, 2020). Despite these intentions, Canada has a long history of employing discriminatory immigration policies, discriminating against people based on class, race, and disabilities. For instance, the *Chinese Immigration Act, 1923* utilized policies such as a head tax in order to restrict Chinese immigration. Following the First World War, several groups were denied entrance to Canada based on their religious practices and nationality (Dirks, 2020). In 1952, a new *Immigration Act* was enacted, however, this new act

continued employing discriminatory policies against immigrants who were not from The United States or European countries. The federal government introduced a points system in 1967 that sought to rank potential immigrants based on their employability, education, English language ability, and familial connections.

Immigration policies underwent substantial change in 1975 under Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau's liberal government, and the introduction of the new *Immigration Act, 1976*. The Act promoted Canada's demographic, economic, social, and cultural goals, while promoting the reunification of families, diversity, and non-discrimination (Dirks, 2020). The Act also enlisted help from the volunteer sector to help newcomers adapt to Canadian society. In Canadian law, refugees became defined as a distinct group of immigrants which required the government to fulfill its commitments to refugees as outlined in international agreements (Dirks, 2020). By 1980, Canada established five classes of immigrants including: Independent (individuals); Humanitarian (refugees and persecuted or displaced people); Family (reuniting with immediately family members); Assisted Relatives (distant relatives acting as sponsors); and Economic (people who are considered highly employable or looking to invest in the Canadian economy) (Dirks, 2020). In 2001, the 1976 *Immigration Act* was replaced with the *Refugee Protection Act*. The Act maintained many of the same policies but extended the family class to include same-sex and common-law relationships (Dirks, 2020). Today, Canada utilizes an Express Entry system that selects skilled immigrants based on a point system that evaluates language skills, education, work experience, employment opportunities, and nominations from a province or territory. Invitations to apply for immigration are only sent to candidates with the highest scores (Government of Canada, 2023). The term 'newcomer' is used by Statistics Canada to refer to "landed immigrants who came to Canada up to five years prior to a given census year" (Statistics

Canada, 2010, p. 1). ‘Newcomer’ is a broad umbrella term that includes immigrants, refugees, and other individuals with migration backgrounds. Newcomers are often referred to as recent immigrants as well. Oikonomidoy et al. (2019) state that while the term ‘newcomer’ is perceived as being somewhat politically neutral, “the groups that are ‘hidden’ behind it are highly politicized” (p. 576) in that the terms ‘immigrant’ and ‘refugee,’ for instance, “carry with them a heavy negative semantic stigma in societies around the world” (p. 577). Castles and Miller (2009) observe a similar occurrence in which they use the term “politicization of migration” (p. 9) to describe how narratives surrounding migration issues become politicized, often shaping societal attitudes and perceptions towards immigrants and refugees. For example, crisis events that result in many people fleeing and trying to seek entry into a new country are often seen as problems resulting in “efforts to ‘control’... ‘limit’ or ‘block’ the number of refugees who enter certain countries” and “are indications of the persistent negative association that plagues refugees” (Oikonomidoy et al., 2019, p. 577).

Canada holds a reputation worldwide for being a country with great ethnocultural and religious diversity. In the 2021 Census, more than 450 ethnic or cultural origins were reported (Statistics Canada, 2022b). As of 2021, almost one in four people are foreign-born, which is the highest proportion on record (Statistics Canada, 2022b). The distribution of the immigrant population in Canada by region of birth has changed dramatically since the beginning of the 20th century, where immigrations were predominantly from Europe and the United States. In 2021, Asia (including the Middle East) represented the largest demographic of immigrants (51.4%) followed by Europe; Caribbean, Bermuda, Central and South America; Africa; and the United States (Statistics Canada, 2022b). Upon arrival, immigrants predominantly settle in Canada’s largest city centers located in Ontario, British Columbia, Quebec, and Alberta (Cheng & Yan,

2018). In 2021, 4.6 million Canadians (12.7%) reported speaking a language other than English or French at home, which has increased from 2001 (9.7%) (Statistics Canada, 2022a).

Statistics Canada (2017) projects that by 2036 children with an immigrant background could represent between 39-49% of the total population of children in Canada. Canadian schools have seen dramatic increases in the number of newcomer students with even greater growth projected in the coming decades (People for Education, 2019). In the majority of Canadian provinces, immigrant children entering the Canadian school system often have limited English experience and are subsequently defined as English Language Learners (ELLs) (Cheng & Yan, 2018). As of 2017, 8% of elementary and 6% of secondary school students were classified as ELLs in Ontario (People for Education, 2017). In the 2021-2022 school year, British Columbia reported having 69,475 ELL students (approximately 10% of students attending school in the province) (BC Ministry of Education and Child Care, 2022). As such, there has been a growing interest among educational researchers to learn more about the experiences of immigrant children and youth as they navigate the adjustment into the Canadian schooling system, new communities, and the larger Canadian society as a whole.

Children with immigrant backgrounds may arrive to Canada having attended educational programs in other countries, have no experience attending educational programs, or they may be children of parents having exclusively attended Canadian schools. Further, "perhaps most important, they arrive from every region of the globe and its systems of education and values" (Garnett, 2012, p. 8). The process of migration often involves multiple transitions for newcomer children as they are having to navigate a new educational system in a new place while they also strive to build a new social network (Adams & Kirova, 2007; de Block & Buckingham, 2007). Further, they are faced with this daunting task while also experiencing biological, cognitive, and

psychological changes as they move through growth and development stages, which could impede well-being when coupled with migration stress (Juang et al., 2018). The pre- and post-migration experiences of newcomer children differ greatly, and social, contextual, familial, and individual factors can have varying impacts on their adjustment experiences (Khanlou et al., 2018; Suárez-Orozco & Marks, 2016). The circumstances surrounding the reasons for migration can also impact the resettlement of newcomers. For instance, "some youth arrive in new locations with their families, motived by opportunities for better education; some are fleeing war or persecution; some arrive alone without any family members; some are undocumented; and some have experienced family deportation" (Juang et al., 2018, p. 798). In any case, having to leave the familiarities of one's home, routines, friends, and family leads to a variety of somatic and affective symptoms (Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001). These challenges are often exacerbated by racism, language difficulties, isolation, culture shock and/or trauma (Ngo & Schleifer, 2005; Rossiter & Rossiter, 2009). One's diverse experiences, potential stressors, and coping mechanisms combine in unique ways to create variations in one's resettlement experience (Kia-Keating & Ellis, 2007; Rousseau, Drapeau, & Rahimi, 2003; Suárez-Orozco et al., 2010). This is important for educators to consider as it would help them to move beyond the deficit discourse as emphasizing one's coping mechanisms highlights their strength and resilience. In addition, understanding diverse experiences helps to challenge negative assumptions and stereotypes. Finally, acknowledging diverse experiences can improve inclusion and lead to more effective support systems and policies.

Policies and public discourse surrounding immigrants, refugees, and asylum seekers correlate with educational policies that directly affect newcomer students in Canadian schools. Countries can greatly assist the integration of newcomer students through the policies and

practices they implement. As such, policy plays a pivotal role in determining the outcomes of newcomers within the host community. (OECD, 2016). Several researchers have examined what Canadian multicultural education policies are currently in place. However, Joshee and Johnson (2007) note that these studies only demonstrate a few clear findings. Policy studies in multicultural education tend to focus on examining how policy statements are enacted within educational spaces; however, a disconnect between policy and what happens in classrooms and schools is observed potentially due to a lack of resources and commitment (Strekalova-Hughes, 2017; Volante, Klinger, Siegel & Yahia, 2019). Ontario's *Equity and Inclusive Education Policy* strives to eliminate barriers related to "sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, race, ethnic origin, religion, socio-economic background, physical or mental ability, or other factors" (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2014, p. 6). Further, each school district in Ontario is responsible for implementing an equity and inclusive education policy with schools expected to put equity and inclusion at the forefront of their programming (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2016). Additionally, *Ontario's Parent Engagement Policy* aims to achieve equity and inclusion by removing barriers that prevent parents and families from engaging with their children's schools (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2013). However, despite the presence of these policy frameworks aimed at successfully integrating newcomer students, the policies are often vague and raise many new questions about how to effectively implement the policies in schools. As Viennet and Pont (2017) state, "there is indeed a difference between passing a policy bill or a strategy and turning it into daily practices for teachers, school administrators and local communities" (p. 8). Often, policies are put forth without any guidance on how to actually implement them. Therefore, to be effective, policies must include clear objectives, adequate resources, measurable tasks, specific responsibilities, and open communication channels between

all involved (Hogwood & Gunn, 1984). Despite policies and programs supporting newcomer students being readily available in Canada, most of these policies are not yet mainstream practices in schools (Guo-Brennan & Guo-Brennan, 2018, 2019b; Leblanc, 2017). For example, Stewart (2011) reported a disconnect between schools and the community integration agencies that could provide targeted support and services for newcomer students' unique needs. Canada has failed to define inclusion at a national policy level (Towle, 2015) and each province and territory is responsible for establishing their own policies pertaining to the inclusion and education of immigrant children. While this may allow each province and territory to take a unique and localized approach that is tailored to their students' specific needs, this may also result in inconsistencies leading to inequitable opportunities and outcomes for students. Cummins (2006) argues that Canada lacks coherent policies relating to the changing demographic of students within its educational institutions, and that this fact contradicts the principles of equity that Canada prides itself upon. Canada vaguely employs the concept of equality as a principle in the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, but a lack of specificity on the term *equal* and leaving this up to interpretation subjugates culturally and linguistically diverse children to program-level weaknesses in their education (Sokal & Katz, 2020). For instance, despite mandating inclusive education courses as part of teacher education programs in Manitoba, 43% of teachers had no instruction concerning teaching students with diverse needs and 38% of teachers reported not feeling confident in their skills this area (Sokal & Sharma, 2014).

Language policy also has a significant impact on the adjustment experiences of newcomer students. Ontario and British Columbia take a similar approach in which multilingual learners are required to learn English as they simultaneously learn the content of the curriculum.

Publicly funded schools employ an inclusive approach where ELL students are taught alongside their English-speaking peers by the same teacher (Mvududu & Thiel-Burgess, 2012). The goal of this approach is to mainstream ELL students as quickly as possible without the use of the ELL's primary language (Mvududu & Thiel-Burgess, 2012). Considering the immense challenge that these students face acculturating to school and forming social bonds while acquiring English, Ontario's *Guide for Supporting English Language Learners* (OME, 2008) states that these learners are still "expected to meet the rigorous challenges of the Ontario curriculum" (p. 2). British Columbia's policy for teaching ELLs stresses the same emphasis on acquiring English as it states, "English language proficiency … and knowledge of the cultures of Canada are fundamental to the success of students in the British Columbia school system and society" (Government of British Columbia, 2018, p. 6). It appears that language can act as a form of control in language policies such as these, as newcomer students are forced to assimilate to dominant norms to achieve success. The field of education has faced turbulent times in both British Columbia and Ontario over the past few decades. In British Columbia, under the Liberal government from 2001-2017, funding for English language learning, special education, and Indigenous education programming was redirected into grants funds without any requirement for how the money was allocated (Chan et al., 2017). The Liberal government was defeated by the NDP in 2017 and although they pledged to increase funding to education, the Diversity in B.C. Schools policy has not been updated since the Liberals' last revision. We see similar trends as well when examining how political upheaval has affected equity and inclusion policies in Ontario's public education system. Soon after Ontario's Conservative Party came into power in 2018, they dismantled anti-racist education programs that had been established by the NDP (George et al., 2020). While the Ontario Ministry of Education adequately defines and describes

what inclusion should look like in its classrooms, no specific methods, funding, or accountability measures to achieve these goals exist (George et al., 2020). Further, scholars continue to agree that systemic barriers in Ontario's education system continue to disadvantage marginalized students (Airton et al., 2019; Brown & Parekh, 2013; James & Turner, 2017). The British Columbia Ministry of Education's policy for diversity and inclusion places much of the responsibility on individual school leaders to develop such policies, as seen here, "in order to carry out their responsibility to address increasing diversity, education leaders should examine Board of Education and school policies, procedures and practices" (Government of British Columbia, 2017, p. 1). Therefore, despite changing demographics in Canada and calls to reexamine educational policies supporting the inclusion of newcomer students, educational policy in Canada continues to lack urgency in addressing this topic. In the context of British Columbia and Ontario, George, Maier, and Robson (2020) argue that policy makers exhibit 'symbolic anti-racism' by taking a stance for racial equity without outlining any, "targeted, substantive programming to identify, rectify, or prevent structural racism" (p. 169). Without critical attention to inequity and exclusion, equity and inclusion cannot be achieved.

Problem

Inclusion is essentially concerned with identifying and removing barriers while improving access and opportunities for all students especially for the groups of learners who may be at risk of exclusion (Ainscow, 2020). In Canada, newcomer students are typically viewed in problem-oriented ways and defined by what they lack (Reeves, 2004). The belief that lacking English language proficiency is both a problem and the only solution has a profound impact on language policies in schools (Bunar, 2019). Gourd (2007) states that language policies in Canada and the United States serve as sites of power that limit the prospects of newcomers by failing to

place value on their ability to speak another or multiple languages and therefore failing to recognize their prior experiences and knowledge. The term "English language learners" has been widely adopted in language policy and educational organizations, yet this term defines these students by what they lack (Martínez, 2018). Further, the voice of newcomer children has been largely ignored despite its importance in research and policy making (Ayoub & Zhou, 2016; James, 2007; Ratković et al., 2017Shamrova & Cummins, 2017).

Research regarding how newcomer children adjust and cope during periods of resettlement is lacking from the research literature. Until recently, research has predominantly focused on the challenges and barriers newcomer students face without emphasizing the profound strength and resilience they exhibit (Oikonomidoy et al., 2019). As such, there is a dominant deficit discourse surrounding this demographic of students (Mawani, 2014; Shapiro & MacDonald, 2017). This may contribute to teachers' beliefs about newcomer students and their academic abilities, working to reinforce stereotypical perceptions of newcomer students. For instance, studies have found that some teachers may hold negative attitudes, stereotypical views of students, misconceptions about language learning, and anti-immigrant sentiments (Cho & Reich, 2008; Pappamihiel, 2007; Schmidt, 2010). Teachers play a vital role in ensuring that all students receive quality education and experience academic success (Cardichon et al., 2020; Chetty et al., 2014; Opper, 2019). However, educational systems continue to be criticized for being monocultural or monolingual spaces while failing to meet the cultural, linguistic, and religious needs of marginalized students (Vang & Chang, 2019; Welply, 2017). Newcomer students' cultural funds of knowledge must be leveraged to shift the deficit discourse away from the focus on a lack of language. Additionally, listening to newcomer children's own lived

experiences disrupts the deficit discourse by confronting and challenging the stereotypes and misconceptions that position these children as lacking skills or abilities.

While the number of newcomer children in publicly funded schools across Canada is rising, it has been widely reported that teachers do not feel prepared to teach culturally and linguistically diverse students (Flynn & Hill, 2005; Ladson-Billings, 2006; Webster & Valeo, 2011). Another factor hindering the preparedness of Canadian teachers in working with diverse learners is the fact that the diversity of communities in Canada is not accurately reflected in the teacher workforce (Hoffman, 2017). It is crucial to have teachers that not only possess diverse cultural or linguistic backgrounds, but also have the ability to interact and engage with students who are different from themselves (Goodwin & Kosnick, 2013). Teacher education programs, therefore, can promote critical awareness and culturally relevant pedagogy that works to mitigate bias and prejudice; however, the institutionalization of courses that develop these concepts remains elusive (Valenzuela, 2016).

Schools act as critical agents of social integration throughout the process of resettlement for newcomer students, and teachers are among the first adults that newcomer children begin to form relationships with in the new country (Wong et al., 2018). Oikonomidoy et al. (2019) states that education researchers must emphasize resilience in order to disrupt the continuing deficit discourse. Resilience is seen as an asset-oriented lens that counterbalances the deficit discourse by focusing students' innovative ways of coping rather than focusing solely on barriers to school integration (Rana et al., 2011).

Despite an abundance of research that identifies the negative effects of migration and displacement (Bronstein & Montgomery, 2011; Fazel & Betancourt, 2018), there remains to be a lack of understanding of newcomer students' lived experiences, as their voices remain unheard

(Iraklis, 2021). Schlein et al. (2021) supports this claim but stating that research has yet to effectively examine these students' experiences in a way that allows for more understanding of their complexity. Through the lack of concrete and actionable policies on multiculturalism and education, Canada has failed to provide students with equal access to equality and justice. Considering the lack of inclusive supportive educational policies, ongoing racism and discrimination, and teachers' low levels of preparedness in teaching diverse students, there is much to be improved when it comes to the integration and inclusion of newcomer students within the Canadian public education system. These factors combine resulting in significant adversity for newcomers to overcome, in an education system that places much of the responsibility of integration and acculturation solely on newcomer children without providing them with adequate supports. Due to the rapidly growing diversity of children in Canadian schools, this issue has become a pressing matter that requires immediate progress and change.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this research is to gain an understanding of the ways in which the lived experiences of newcomer children challenge the deficit-discourse that permeates the educational research literature and policies by engaging newcomer children to share their own stories. Additionally, this research seeks to emphasize the ways in which newcomer children draw upon their resilience and utilize agency as mechanisms for coping through the challenges that come along with resettlement. Racialized newcomer children were recruited as participants because the intersectional vulnerabilities they encounter are greater compared to non-racialized newcomers (Lee, 2017). In accordance with the definition used by Statistics Canada (2010), the newcomer children were required to be landed immigrants in Canada having arrived within the past five years. Participants for this study were recruited in British Columbia and Ontario as the two

provinces have “similar proportions of visible minorities and each contain one of Canada’s prominent ‘gateway cities’ for recent immigrants” (George et al., 2020, p. 160).

To learn more about the experiences of newcomer students during acclimation to school in Canada, two research questions have been developed. Using a qualitative case study research design, the study aims to answer the following questions:

1. What is the experience of adjusting to school in a new country like for newcomer children attending elementary school in Ontario and British Columbia?
2. What are the factors that hinder and support resiliency in newcomer children during acculturation?

Rationale

Despite the growing population of newcomer children in Canada, there is still much to be learned about their experiences and how to best provide support. Much of the research to date has predominantly focused on the challenges and barriers that newcomers face when acclimating, while little has explored the natural resilience of these students and how they continue to cope despite the stressors they endure. Counterstorytelling, a major tenant of Critical Race Theory (CRT), is defined as, “a method of telling the stories of those people whose experience are not often told” (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002, p. 26). Listening to the lived experiences of newcomer children provides us with a deeper understanding of what adaptation is like in the Canadian context which can also then inspire societal action and change (Schlein et al., 2021). Thus, counterstories serve as a powerful tool that can be used to contradict oppressive misconceptions that reinforce societal inequalities. Gaining a deeper understanding of newcomer students’ experiences in Canadian schools, through their own stories and perspectives, may help to promote the need to put more supportive and inclusive measures in place.

The research literature identifies the in-school barriers that affect the integration of newcomer students to a greater degree than in-school sources of support and this is said to be indicative of the lack of sources of support for newcomer students (Oikonomidoy, 2019). This study will enable educational stakeholders and policy makers to learn more about the identity of their newcomer students so that they are better prepared to provide them with equal educational opportunities and appropriate supports. While there has been an increased focus on utilizing asset-oriented lenses in research on newcomer students in recent years, it is not widespread. Additionally, research surrounding the newcomer children predominantly focuses on youth experiencing the transition into secondary school or post-secondary education, while research concerning newcomer children entering elementary school is sparse. As such, this research will contribute to the limited collection of literature in this field.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

This chapter reviews the literature around the experiences of newcomer children and youth in schools, both in Canadian and international contexts. Although the focus of this study is newcomer children, much of the existing research literature focuses on the experiences of older newcomer children and youth. As such, studies involving newcomer youth are included in this literature review as they contribute to our broader understanding of the experiences of individuals from immigrant backgrounds. Additionally, many aspects of their experiences intersect and relate to those of newcomer children including language acquisition, acculturation, identity formation, and social inclusion. In this chapter, the theoretical framework guiding this study is discussed as well. Empirical studies that examine the unique perspectives and experiences of, and as told by, newcomer children are limited. Therefore, research was conducted to gain understanding of the factors, structures, and policies that may have an impact on how newcomers perceive and navigate these experiences. As such, this literature review discusses (1) theories surrounding acculturation and how this notion contributes to our understanding of migration experiences, (2) the context of school and the power schools have in shaping the experiences of newcomer students, (3) studies examining resilience in immigrant and refugee children and youth, and (4) studies examining factors that protect against adversity. The individual factors, family factors, social and community factors, school and educational factors, and cultural and societal factors are discussed in regard to the role they play in both hindering and supporting resilience. Then, literature pertaining to educational policy surrounding the inclusion of newcomer children in schools is examined before discussing the gaps in the literature. Lastly, the theoretical framework that informs this study is outlined. This includes

research and findings in resilience studies, as well as notions of CRT and the role of counterstories as a method for addressing the research questions guiding this study.

Acculturation

Global trends on migration and globalization have created a new sense of urgency to prepare children with intercultural awareness to be global citizens (Green, 2003). Acculturation studies is a central theme in the research literature surrounding the adaptation and adjustment of immigrants. The most widely accepted and frequently cited definition of acculturation states that, "acculturation comprehends those phenomena which result when groups of individuals having different cultures come into continuous first-hand contact, with subsequent changes in the original cultural patterns of either or both groups" (Redfield et al., 1936, p. 149-150). The process of acculturation is conceptualized as being a dual process in which its outcomes hinge upon interactions between the dominant and minority culture. Berry (1997) extended this theory by classifying migration experiences into four varying categories of acculturation along a continuum, with marginalization at one end, and integration at the other. Other categories include separation and assimilation. Researchers called for the greater recognition of the role of the host society and as such, Berry (2005) proposed a new definition of the concept which states:

> acculturation is the dual process of cultural and psychological change that takes place as a result of contact between two or more cultural groups and their individual members. At the group level, it involves changes in social structures and institutions and in cultural practices. At the individual level, it involves changes in a person's behavioural repertoire. (p. 698-699)

Critics argue that Berry's acculturation framework examines acculturation from a deficit-oriented lens in which it expects newcomers to experience negative outcomes due to migration

stressors (Karim, 2021; Motti-Stefanidi, 2018). Further, researchers challenge the notion of having fixed categories as outcomes of acculturation, as well as the assumption that stress is an integral part of acculturation (Karim, 2021). This assumption rejects the possibility of varying mindsets towards acculturation as well as the various coping strategies one might employ over time.

Multiple perspectives prompt researchers to consider other contributing acculturation factors as well. Throughout the process of growth and development, newcomer children and youth gain the knowledge and skills that allow them to participate in their host culture as well as the host society (Oppedal, 2006). Therefore, a developmental perspective argues that it is critical to consider how the processes of normative childhood development contribute as well to the processes of acculturation (Titzmann & Silbereisen, 2012). According to an ecological perspective, aspects of the child's socialization setting also influence acculturation. These include family, schools, and society (Ward, 2010). A multidimensional perspective suggests that newcomer children and youth follow varying acculturation trajectories (Karim, 2019). It would be expected that each child would experience, acquire, and maintain cultural practices differently (Schwartz et al., 2020). For some, tensions may arise as a result of having to navigate conflicting cultural values.

Age, gender, and religion influence acculturation in the context of both school and society. For instance, acculturation was seen to take place more quickly for children than for their parents (Roxas & Fruja, 2019). Through their analysis of the *Longitudinal Immigrant Student Adaptaion* (LISA) survey of recent immigrant youth in Boston, Suárez-Orozco, Singh, Abo-Zena, Du and Roeser (2011) found that religious identity provided the participants with social support, instilled them with a greater sense of purpose and inspired them to avoid risk

behaviours. Similarly, immigrant and refugee youth have been observed to utilize faith as a source of internal support that gave them a sense of stability (Rossiter et al., 2015). However, a study by Goldblatt and Rosenblum (2007) found that contradicting religious beliefs and values served as an additional challenge to navigate for Ethiopian youth in Israel. Williams and colleagues (2002) conducted group interviews and classroom observations with young Spanish-speaking Latinas taking ESL classes at a high school in the Midwest United States and found that gendered expectations affected the acculturative experiences of Latinas in the United States. Despite having their own dreams and ambitions, the participants in this study described having to take on caregiver duties such as taking care of their younger siblings and completing household tasks while their brothers were encouraged to find work. Additionally, the participants in this study felt that their ESL teachers held lower expectations of them compared to their male peers which limited the opportunities they were given. While these studies pertain to the experiences of newcomer youth, they are important to note in the context of newcomer children as they provide insight into their developmental experiences and provide us with an understanding of how newcomer children may be affected by similar stressors and experiences.

The multitude of identity factors and how they intersect across contexts contributes to the complexity of acculturation. Acculturation research tends to assume that acceptance into the dominant society is the most desirable outcome without emphasizing how cultural values can be maintained and woven into the fabric of new spaces. Integration appears to be the most favourable outcome of acculturation, in which individuals are accepted into the mainstream culture while still being able to maintain a balance with their home culture (Berry, 1980). However, acculturation research tends to ignore how societal power structures decide whose practices are seen as normative (Sung & Wahl, 2021). This is significant because these societal

power structures can limit or restrict integration for newcomers and thus decide who is accepted. For instance, in a study by Oreopoulos (2011), thousands of resumes were randomly created to represent various immigrant applicants to Canada from China, India, Pakistan, and Britain. Resumes were also created to nonimmigrants, including white Canadians, first- and second-generation immigrants, with some purposely utilizing ethnic-sounding names. The resumes were then submitted to various job applications. The findings from this study revealed that immigrants were much less likely to be invited for a job interview compared to Canadian-born individuals and those with English-sounding names. Holding degrees from prestigious institutions was not seen to be an advantage for the foreign-born individuals. These findings seem to suggest that public discourse in Canada does not support cultural inclusion. This is evidenced in research carried out by Reitz and colleagues (2009) in which their analysis of the Ethnic Diversity Survey conducted with over 41,000 Canadians found that some Canadians believe that other cultural values and norms are not compatible with Canadian ideas. As we see here, it is important to consider how predominately held views and beliefs serve as the foundation for which our societal structures and policies are built upon, as this fact ultimately impacts one's experiences in the host society.

The Role of Schools

For many newcomer children, schools are among the first places in which they begin to experience the host culture firsthand. As such, schools can facilitate positive acculturative experiences for newcomer children by assisting in their language acquisition, honouring their cultural backgrounds, providing them with a safe environment to learn new cultural norms, and supporting their social integration. Outside of the classroom learning environment, schools can provide newcomer students with opportunities for informal learning experiences as well such as

through clubs and extra-curricular activities. Therefore, schools can have positive effects on children in that they can provide the space and opportunities for them to interact and form relationships, which directly correlates with both academic success and overall well-being (Brown et al., 2006). Throughout history, however, we see that schools are not always places where children of diverse and minority backgrounds have access to a quality education (Anyon, 2014; Carter & Darling-Hammond, 2016; Goodwin, 2016; Rothstein, 2015).

Devine (2011) states that subjectification occurs in schools, in which children come to learn where they fit in relation to other people. Schools impose conditions on children that communicate their values and beliefs through their practices and, "through these practices, schools intentionally or unintentionally impose conditions on young people's possibilities and pathways for establishing relations with others" (Sedano, 2012, p. 383). Schools must be a place where students feel that their strengths and characteristics are recognized and valued. Otherwise, schools will fail to achieve equity and inclusion (Andrews & Lupart, 2013; Guo-Brennan & Guo Brennan, 2018). Today, schools continue to be criticized for not meeting the needs of their diverse students. Interactions with teachers and peers within the classroom context can affect newcomer students' developmental and acculturative outcomes (Schachner et al., 2018). Studies have revealed a range of inequalities that immigrant students face in their classrooms including discrimination (Dryden-Peterson, 2016), ethnocentric curriculum (Gillborn, 2015), lack of teacher training (Arnot et al., 2014; Suárez-Orozco et al., 2014), and deficit discourses surrounding minority groups (Housee, 2012). Yet, it is widely agreed upon that it is the school's responsibility to assist immigrant children and youth in social inclusion (Anisef & Kibride, 2003; Devine, 2011; Fangen et al., 2012; Garnett et al., 2008; Krahn & Taylor, 2005; Sweet et al., 2010; Wilkinson et al., 2011).

As such, it is critical that schools are places that are free from the harmful effects of discriminatory biases and beliefs to create an environment that promotes equality. Additionally, teachers must be prepared to provide all children with equitable learning opportunities, regardless of their cultural or linguistic backgrounds. Creating an inclusive learning environment that honours diversity and inclusion has been observed to lead to increased interethnic friendships (Schachner et al., 2015), less discrimination (Schwarzenthal et al., 2017), better academic achievement, and emotional adjustment (Schachner et al., 2016). As acculturation is a dual process occurring through the interaction between newcomers and the host society (Reed et al., 2012), newcomers acculturate through a multitude of other means occurring outside of the formal school environment as well. As such, schools should consider how informal learning experiences affect the acculturation of newcomers to support their inclusion. For example, schools can support acculturation through informal learning experiences to support language learning by fostering peer interactions, provide opportunities for peer mentorship, and seek out initiatives that allow newcomers to engage with the wider community.

Risk Factors

A multitude of both internal and external factors affect one's capacity for resilience in positive or negative ways. Risk factors, then, refer to factors that hinder resilience and increase the likelihood of adverse outcomes (OECD, 2018). In relation to newcomer children, risk factors can exist throughout all stages of migration. Motti-Stefanidi (2014) conducted a longitudinal study on the adaptation of immigrant youth in Greek schools to examine the risks associated with immigration and adaptions, as well as the role of resilience in determining one's outcomes as risk factors hinder resilience as they increase one's vulnerability to stress (Diehl et al., 2012). For example, the findings from this study demonstrated that there was a clear risk factor associated

with immigrant status as the participants demonstrated lower academic achievement, they received minimal linguistic and educational support, and they faced racism and discrimination. In the following sections, the different risk factors will be discussed. These include individual factors, family factors, social and community factors, school and educational factors, and cultural and societal factors.

Individual Factors

In 2016, the Ontario Ministry of Education requested that School Mental Health Ontario monitor the mental health needs of newcomer students. Through this endeavor, they determined that the current interventions in place for newcomer students were not effective enough in addressing the students' adjustment difficulties and indicators of distress (Crooks et al., 2020). In a study by Shakya et al. (2010), newcomer youth aged 16-24 from four communities in Toronto, Canada were asked to identify key stressors and challenges they faced as well as how these challenges impacted their well-being. The findings that resulted from the focus groups indicated that most stressors were related to settlement and discrimination/exclusion, in which they described being confronted with challenges in finding work, housing, and supportive networks. Youth shared that the mental health effects they experienced from settlement related challenges included stress, low self-esteem, anxiety, worry, sadness, and depression (Shakya et al., 2010). Other researchers also demonstrated settlement as a major stressor that can compound mental health issues among newcomer youth (Berry et al., 2006). Newcomers who have arrived in a new place with the hopes of a better life may view acculturation as a means to success, where refugees may be more likely to reject the practices of the host society (Sung & Wahl, 2021). Voluntary immigrant children tend to experience greater academic success than refugees who are displaced and forced to leave their homes (Collet, 2010). This may be because immigrant

children are typically better prepared for their resettlement compared to refugees who are forced to leave (Chrismas & Chrismas, 2017). As such, refugees may experience more severe stressors throughout their migration journeys. This is significant as stressors experienced in pre- and post-migration can pose challenges for resilience in newcomer children as well. For instance, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is known to be a destabilizing factor for some who may then require additional specialized support (Ghazali, 2004). Copious amounts of stress and trauma can severely impact a newcomer child's cognition and academic performance (Kaplan et al., 2016). At the same time, trauma may be overemphasized as a problem at the individual level, which then shifts focus away from other challenges they are experiencing (Rutter, 2006). A hyperfocus on trauma is further restricting and damaging because it ignores the child's resilience (Boyden, 2011). These findings suggest that resources supporting the mental health and well-being would be beneficial in easing the stressors that newcomer children and youth face. Despite this, there are few studies of school-based interventions that focus on addressing the mental health and complex needs of newcomer students (Fazel, 2018). Further, Rossiter et al. (2015) investigated the experiences of immigrant and refugee youth during resettlement and shared that newcomer youth received very limited psychosocial support upon arriving to Canada. While programs in Canada have been designed to support newcomer students' integration, they are not readily available or difficult to access as they have not yet become mainstream practices in schools (Guo-Brennan & Guo-Brennan 2018, 2019a; Leblanc, 2017). Educators alone cannot sufficiently address the needs of newcomer students, and as such, additional supports are needed (MacNevin, 2012; Stewart, 2011).

Family Factors

There are many potential stressors that newcomer youth and children might experience on a family level. Research related to family level risk factors affecting overall child development primarily emphasizes the impact of socioeconomic background and parenting related challenges (Luthar et al., 2000; Rutter, 2006). For instance, a loss of socioeconomic status upon arrival in the host country can impose stress on caregivers to provide stability for their children (OECD, 2018). Further, children may take on additional stress when they are worried about their family's financial problems (d'Abreu et al., 2021). Immigrant and refugee parents may be less able to provide psychological support to their children due to the immense stress they themselves are enduring, having to deal with the pressure to relocate and secure safety for their family (Khanlou et al., 2018). Separation from family members can serve as a pre- and post-migration stressor as well (Schlein et al., 2021). Understandably, losing a parent, caregiver, or another family member before and during migration can be a major stressor causing lasting trauma (Panter-Brick et al., 2018). Valencia (2013) conducted interviews and drawing activities with immigrant children aged between 9 and 11 years old who were attending school in Ontario. The participants reported being separated from their grandparents in their home country was an emotional hardship that they struggled with long after arriving in Canada. One participant in particular drew a picture of himself being dragged away from his house by his mother while crying and trying to hold on to his house. Todorova et al. (2005) had a similar finding in which youth participants described the loss they felt after having to separate from extended family members.

While the transition into adolescence comes with significant developmental challenges, immigrant and refugee youth may face additional challenges, including rapid changes to their roles and responsibilities within their household (Hynie et al., 2012). Due to changes in family

structure during migration, some children may need to take on additional roles in their home such as helping to look after younger siblings (Diaków & Goforth, 2021). The term 'culture brokering' is used to describe how immigrant children often help their parents navigate the culture and language of their new community by facilitating communication and cultural interpretation (Jones et al., 2012). Newcomer children often take on the role of 'cultural broker' for their parents since children typically learn new languages more quickly than adults (Birman, 2006). This may be a stressor for children as they are taking on additional responsibilities while acclimating to a new place as well. Parental involvement has been seen to be a protective factor but many immigrants and refugees encounter barriers in becoming involved with their children's school. For example, Turney and Kao (2009) conducted a study using data from the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study to examine the barriers that immigrant parents face in becoming involved with their children's schools. They found that immigrant parents faced a greater number of, and more significant barriers compared to native-born white parents primarily due to linguistic differences. Research has also documented that teachers may hold beliefs that parents of different races and ethnicities are more, or less, involved in their child's education (Fergus, 2017). Some scholars support this claim by asserting beliefs that Black and Latinx parents are not involved enough in their child's education are very prevalent in American schools (Delgado-Gaitan, 2004). At the same time, many immigrant families experience barriers to inclusion at their child's new school due to limited knowledge of educational systems in the host country, conflicting expectations due to cultural differences and language barriers (Carreon et al., 2005; Schofield, 2006). For instance, Carreon and colleagues (2005) shared that immigrant families reported not feeling welcomed at school activities; they experienced great difficulty in communication with school staff and felt that that their contributions went unnoticed. Oxman-

Martinez and Choi (2014) state that conflict between schools and immigrant families can cause students to develop negative feelings towards school and become disengaged, which compromises their psychosocial and academic adjustment. Not understanding the challenges that newcomer families experience can preserve teachers' negative perceptions of immigrant parents and families, serving as a barrier to inclusion within their children's school.

Social and Community Factors

Social adaptation plays a critical role in the success of young children transitioning to school, which in turn affects their success throughout their educational careers (Benner & Crosnoe, 2011). The context of reception varies widely and can have both positive and negative implications for children. Murphy (2010) defines settlement as being, "the long-term, dynamic process through which immigrants attempt to achieve full participation in various domains of social life in the society of permanent residence" (p. 11). Settlement then is a social process in which individuals can experience social inclusion or exclusion (Selimos & Daniel, 2017). Social exclusion occurs on both structural and symbolic levels. For newcomers, visible and invisible elements of their identity can contribute to experiences of otherness and marginalization which can hinder their social and academic integration in their new schools (Li, 2010; Oikonomidoy, 2007; Shin, 2012). Research has widely documented the social exclusion of immigrant children and youth in education (Fangen et al., 2012). In addition, an unwelcoming school environment can exacerbate the challenges students are facing. The student's age at migration is said to be a possible challenge for students in acclimating to school in Canada as it can make social integration more difficult. For instance, in a study by Masinda, Jacquet and Moore (2014), African Francophone newcomer students in British Columbia reported that they felt it was easier to make friends if you were arriving to an elementary school rather than a high school. The

participants in this study explained that older teenage students were more resistant to making new friends with immigrant students. Poor peer interactions negatively impact academic performance and can lead to low self-esteem and social anxiety (Suárez-Orozco et al., 2009). Challenges in creating a new social network are exacerbated when students encounter language barriers as well. Thus, lacking relationships and social bonds has been observed to be a stressor for newcomer students and youth. For example, in a study by Smith et al. (2021), youth participants described feeling misunderstood by Canadian teachers and peers at schools. The participants shared that on top of the normal developmental stress that comes along with being a teenager, they also had to endure bullying and racism.

School and Educational Factors

Attending schools that are under-resourced has been observed to be a factor that poses a risk to the successful integration of newcomer children and youth (Suárez-Orozco et al., 2008, 2010). In a study investigating the experiences of newcomer youth in Canada from Smith and colleagues (2021), students expressed that they did not have enough in-class support in regard to accessing the curriculum, compared to ELL classes. As such, youth participants unanimously agreed upon the need for more language supports in the Canadian education system. Lacking adequate instruction in the new language can negatively impact educational outcomes as students may struggle to access the curriculum (Ngo & Schleifer, 2005). Canadian general classroom teachers seldom have experience and training in explicit language teaching. Further, public education in Canada lacks adequate funding to support students learning English through the support of and frequent access to language teachers. Due to the lack of supportive resources and adequate teacher preparation, teachers may perceive newcomer students as being a challenge or burden when they arrive, as they are unable to support their integration effectively. In a study by

Amjad (2018) Muslim students attending Canadian schools reported feeling that their teachers were often frustrated and impatient with them because of the extra support they required. Rossiter et al. (2015) had a similar finding in which immigrant and refugee youth attending Canadian schools shared that they perceived some teachers to be too busy or to not have the skills to modify curricular content in order to accommodate their needs. Further, the same participants shared that additional supports at school were not always available. At the same time, ESL classes may serve to further exclude newcomer students if they are deprived of meaningful opportunities to engage with their peers and participate in general classroom activities (Selimos & George, 2018).

Most immigrants in Canada speak languages other than Canada's official languages. For instance, 70% of all immigrants reported speaking a language other than English or French as their native language (Council for Learning, 2009). Language barriers threaten the successful inclusion of newcomer children in the social, emotional, and academic realms of school. Cummins (2000) states that it may take two to three years for young newcomers to acquire basic interpersonal communication skills, and five to seven years to develop academic language proficiency necessary for content-based learning. Older newcomer youth learning English generally face greater linguistic challenges compared to younger newcomer children (Rossiter & Rossiter, 2009). This may exacerbate academic challenges for older newcomers.

Language barriers can cause social isolation and a perceived lack of competence (Carrasquillo & Rodriguez, 2002). Ayoub and Zhou (2023) investigated the experiences of Syrian refugee youth in Canada. Participants shared that language barriers were the biggest challenge they faced when they began school as it prevented them from making friends and forming social bonds. Despite growing calls from researchers to support the simultaneous

development of children's multiple languages, teachers are not equipped with the training or support to do so (Liu et al., 2017). When teachers do not possess the adequate knowledge or training to specifically support linguistically diverse students, they can exacerbate the challenges that confront them (O'Brien, 2011). Additionally, when students are encouraged to acquire proficiency in English at the expense of their native language development, this can have a detrimental impact on their identity formation, and the value they see reflected upon diverse aspects of their identity (Cummins, 1986). Yoon et al. (2010) support this claim by stating that monolinguistic teaching pedagogy and practices can lead to assimilation where newcomers are pushed to blend in with the majority group by losing aspects of their identity. Teaching practices that exclude the students' first language(s) can have detrimental effects on their English language acquisition. Misconceptions about language learning leads teachers to ignore students' first language as an asset, instead viewing it as a problem that can only be solved through the swift acquisition of English (Bunar, 2019).

Teachers with immigrant backgrounds or who have experiences with migration may be in a position to offer more support to newcomer students as they are better able to relate to their students' experiences. However, teachers in Canada are predominantly white (Ryan et al., 2009) and little evidence can be found to support if efforts are being made to recruit a more diverse teacher workforce. This poses a risk to the experiences of newcomer students in schools if they are being taught by teachers who are unable to understand what they are going through and provide them with necessary support. For instance, many students from African backgrounds will go through Canadian educational systems without ever having an African or Black teacher and have shared that they feel their white teachers do not understand them or their challenges (Briggs, 2018; Shizha et al., 2020; Wun, 2016). Numerous studies spanning decades have

documented white teachers' negative perceptions, differential treatment, and racial stereotyping of racialized students (Goodwin, 2020). As expected, institutionalized deficit frameworks can pose suboptimal welcoming conditions for students (Suárez-Orozco, Suárez-Orozco & Todorova, 2008). In fact, deficit discourses have been found to be of the most damaging factors affecting the educational opportunities for newcomer students (Shapiro & MacDonald, 2017). Block and colleagues (2014) states that, "there is a tendency to adopt a deficit model that treats people from refugee backgrounds as victims rather than recognizing their potential and building on their strengths and resilience" (p. 137). Students perceived under this deficit framework are often marginalized by schools which can lead to lower levels of achievement, attendance, and school completion (Artiles & Kozleski, 2016; Blanchett, 2009; George & Darling-Hammond, 2019; Goodwin, 2016; Noguera et al., 2016; OECD, 2018; UNESCO, 2019). Therefore, deficit frameworks permeate through schools and impact the expectations that teachers hold for their students.

In Canadian public schools, it is not uncommon for teachers to believe that Black newcomer students are loud, delinquent, and not as intelligent as other students (Carter Andrews et al., 2019; Shizha et al., 2020; Wilson-Forsberg et al., 2020). In a year-long case study with Mexican newcomer students in the United States, participants described how teachers were constantly surveilling them to see if they were doing something wrong (Gutierrez, 2014). Birman and Tran (2015) had a similar finding in their ethnographic study of 19 Somali Bantu refugees. Students are aware of the perceptions their teachers hold of them and students are more likely to maintain strong efforts in schools when they feel their teachers believe in and think highly of them (Suárez-Orozco et al., 2008). In a study by Selimos and Daniel (2017), youth participants shared that their teachers often discouraged them and limited their aspirations through practices

such as streaming. Black newcomer students are disproportionately over-represented in special education programs (Toronto District School Board, 2017) and often discouraged from enrolling in more academic classes such as science, engineering, and mathematics courses (James & Turner, 2017; Shizha et al., 2020). Newcomer youth participants in a study conducted by Smith and colleagues (2021) advised teachers to check in with their newcomer students frequently as they themselves rarely felt comfortable enough to initiate contact when they needed help. Children who feel rejected by their teachers become disengaged with school which has compromising effects on their emotional adjustment as well as their academic achievement (Suárez-Orozco et al., 2009). This is an important area of conflict in this field since many researchers have declared the importance of employing diverse teacher workforces in meeting the needs of students (e.g., Dei, 2002; Quiocho & Rios, 2000; Ryan et. al, 2009; Villegas & Davis, 2007). As we see, teachers have the position to act as educational gatekeepers, depriving students of academic and social supports and limiting possible pathways for their students.

In their review of the literature surrounding newcomers' experience in schools, Oikonomidoy et al. (2019) theorize that, "contextual national and global dynamics have both direct and indirect impacts on newcomers' day-to-day lives and experiences in schools" (p. 577). Academic research can create and reinforce an 'image' of newcomer students by centering the narrative on the challenges and barriers these students face in their daily lives at school. Deficit frameworks threaten resilience in immigrant students because these misconceptions may become internalized, having profound effects on one's self-esteem, self-worth, and beliefs about their ability to experience success.

Teaching methods and pedagogy vary significantly in educational systems around the world. Newcomer students may become immersed in a school culture or learning environment

that is starkly different from the one they are used to. As such, this may serve as a barrier for positive integration when students are having to learn a new set of rules and expectations at their new school (Beacco et al., 2005). For instance, African refugee students in Manitoba reported feeling lost in the Canadian schooling system due to the loss of social, emotional, and education structures they were used to (Kanu, 2008).Teaching practices and pedagogy should strive to create space for students to express their "funds of knowledge" (Moinolnolki & Han, 2017) in which they are able to share previously acquired knowledge, life experiences and language within their classroom learning environment. Recent studies suggest that schools in Canada are failing to meet the needs of newcomer students by not being culturally responsive or having adequate supports in place (Gallucci & Kassan, 2019; Ngo, 2012). Seeing one's own race, culture, and language represented positively supports positive identity formation, and as such, young immigrant children who do not see these aspects of their identity reflected in their learning may not feel as if they belong and may even develop negative dispositions and attitudes towards their values, race, and culture. Rarely is the role of non-immigrant peers in welcoming newcomer students discussed. When diversity issues are not discussed in the curriculum, schools play a role in reinforcing discriminative behaviours (Solomon & Singer, 2011), contributing to systemic oppression (Arar et al., 2019; Guo-Brennan & Guo-Brennan, 2018, 2019a).

Cultural and Societal Factors

Newcomers often face 'culture shock' when immersed in a new culture that is starkly different from their own. Adapting to life in a society with conflicting cultural beliefs and values can result in conflict as a result of cultural incompatibility (Toppelberg & Collins, 2010). Racism and discrimination are ingrained in society and often reflect the societal values and beliefs of a given place. As a result, newcomers may be subjected to direct and indirect forms of racial

discrimination. For instance, students from continents such as Africa, South America, and Asian and regions such as the Middle East have been found to experience more racism than students from North America and Europe (Lee, 2017). Dealing with racial bullying and stereotyping led Korean newcomer teens to feel shame and social withdrawal in a study by Choi and Lim (2014). Female Muslim students shared that wearing a hijab caused them to be alienated by their peers (Oikonomidoy, 2007). Families of African migrant children and youth reported racism as being very prevalent in Alberta's schools (Mason et al., 2022). In a national longitudinal study of immigrant children and youth in Canada, discrimination was associated with negative outcomes including low self-esteem and poor social skills (Oxman-Martinez & Choi, 2014). Therefore, post-migration experiences can affect how newcomers perceive themselves and their self-worth (Khanlou & Crawford, 2006). Ngo and Schleifer (2005) state that the identity of newcomer children, "may be complicated by internalized racism, resulting from exposure to pervasive negative stereotypes of ethnic minorities" (p. 29).

Since the early 2000s, 'English Language Learners' or 'ELLs' has been used to describe linguistically diverse students who are learning English (Yoon, 2022) and this term is commonly used in language policy as well as educational institutions throughout Canada. However, the term serves to preserve notions of deficit as it defines these learners by what they lack (Martínez, 2018). Martínez (2018) claims terms including 'multilingual learners', 'emergent bilingual learners', and 'dual language learners' are more asset-based. When schools position newcomers as ELLs, "…it implies a deferential power toward the English language by positioning English as a priority while positioning language learners at the periphery" (Yoon, 2022, p. 4). As such, these values are communicated to students who may begin to see aspects of their identities in a negative light. In this way, schools perpetuate institutionalized racism and discrimination by

maintaining monolinguistic policy and pedagogy. For example, there has been ongoing debate in the United States surrounding the inclusion of Spanish language classes stemming from the fear of it compromising English as the dominant language (Gándara & Aldana, 2014). In France, debates arose over the introduction of Arabic lessons in schools as it was perceived as being a threat to national unity (Genevard, 2016). In 2016, Prime Minister of England, David Cameron, stated that not mastering English posed as a risk of extremism (Mason & Sherwood, 2016). It appears that language can act as a form of control in immigration and educational policies, as newcomer students are forced to assimilate to dominant norms to achieve success.

Protective Factors

Protective factors are defined as individual, family and environment level characteristics that protect against the negative effects of adversity (Masten & Reed, 2002). Theories of resilience propose that newcomer children experiencing adversity will benefit from interventions that enhance factors for successful adaptation, rather than interventions focused on reducing risk (Masten & Barnes, 2018; Masten, 2011, 2014). Protective factors are, therefore, equally as important as risk factors because they can help identify what makes a difference in improving the developmental and adaptive outcomes in individuals. 'Protective factors' are commonly used interchangeably with the term 'promotive factors' but resilience research distinguishes between the two terms by stating that protective factors acknowledge the presence of adversity more so than promotive factors, which are seen to promote resilience in general (Masten & Cicchetti, 2016). For the purpose of this review, 'protective factors' is used to recognize the wide array of assets and resources that newcomers utilize in response to the challenges they face throughout their journeys.

Individual Factors

Newcomer children and youth have been observed to employ a range of individual traits and characteristics and various coping mechanisms that promote resilience. Examples of these include emotional regulation, high aspirations, dedicated hard work, an internal locus of control, agency, and optimism (Betancourt & Khan, 2008; Este & Van Ngo, 2011). For instance, in a study by Smith and Colleagues (2021), four newcomer youth in Canada aged 15 to 18 years old shared that having patience, looking forward to the future, and a positive mindset helped them endure when facing difficulties. The difficulties they described included feelings of fear and anxiety, making new friends, learning English, bullying, navigating the new culture, and a lack of academic support. In the same study, when asked to share advice to other newcomers to help in their adjustment, the participants shared that they should push themselves out of their comfort zones by talking to their classmates, getting involved in their communities, not being afraid to ask for help, and by working hard to learn English. Allard (2015) found that newcomer students utilized 'deportation humour' as a coping mechanism to alleviate anxiety. Researchers have observed high levels of academic motivation and goal-oriented behaviours in newcomer immigrants and refugees. In a study carried out by Rana and colleagues (2011), 19 Sudanese refugee students exhibited high levels of motivation, goal setting, determination, and resourcefulness. Similarly, Miyazawa (2013) found that newcomer students were inspired to persevere and cope with difficulties by remaining optimistic and hopeful about their futures. Schroeter and James (2015) conducted a study with immigrant students aged 15 to 18 attending a French school in Western Canada. Through participant observation and semi-structured interviews, the researchers reported that the participants had high aspirations for themselves and were motivated to do well in school because it would lead to better social and economic progress. Selimos and Daniel (2017) found a similar theme in that newcomer student participants

in their study viewed Canada as a place of opportunity in which doing well in school would help them achieve their hopes and dreams. Mason and colleagues (2022) found in their study that immigrant children in Canada eagerly participated in tutoring programs and shared that the additional support helped them to remain hopeful and confident in their abilities. Therefore, we see that the individual characteristics outlined here can serve as protective factors nurturing one's capacity for resilience. This poses important implications for those working with immigrant and refugee youth as recognizing the impact of these protective factors may lead to improved supports and programs that can improve their integration and adaptation by helping these students build these traits and skills.

The Supporting Transition Resilience of Newcomer Groups (STRONG) intervention program is based on a holistic model that seeks to understand the newcomer experience and was developed to strengthen newcomer students' resilience by promoting their individual strengths and coping skills to foster a positive sense of self and belonging (Crooks et al., 2020). Activities during these small group sessions focused on school connectedness, social inclusion and cultural identity while also incorporating cognitive strategies to practice coping skills and stress management techniques. The effectiveness of this intervention has been significant. After the intervention concluded, newcomer students displayed optimism for the future, improved stress management and coping skills and a greater sense of belonging in the school community (Crooks et al., 2020). Therefore, fostering protective factors on an individual level appears to be highly important in building one's capacity for resilience and supporting students' transitions. However, it appears that when newcomer children enter school, they face pressures to acquire the linguistic skills or cultural knowledge of the host society as quickly as possible to become integrated

within the new environment. This view fails to acknowledge the importance of nurturing their own internal protective factors and coping mechanisms that can support their adaptation.

Family Factors

Attachment with caregivers and family stability have been seen to be protective factors for resilience in newcomer children (Betancourt & Khan, 2008; Este & Van Ngo, 2011). Rossiter and colleagues (2015) reported that immigrant and refugee youth in Canada shared that having positive relationships with their family members helped them deal with negative experiences during resettlement. Mason and colleagues (2022) had a similar finding in which parents of African migrant children in Canada helped their children develop emotional intelligence to help them cope with the discrimination they were enduring at school. In the same study, parents were advocates for their children, holding school officials accountable in ensuring their child's needs were met. Family plays a particularly important role in fostering resilience as the maintenance of cultural identity and practices appears to be an important factor (Pickren, 2014). In a study by Smith and Colleagues (2021), newcomer youth participants shared that they viewed family as a source of support, knowing they had people they could talk to about the stressors they were facing. In the same study, youth participants shared that they felt a sense of comfort in being able to maintain their home culture and ethnic identity. Further, the research literature frequently reports that immigrant families view education as being vitally important for their children's success. Immigrant families often choose to migrate based on the hopes of providing their children with better educational opportunities. Refugees also consider education as being critically important in improving life for their children, sometimes even seeing schools as safe havens (Ayoub & Zhou, 2016; Guo-Brennan & Guo & Brennan, 2019a, 2019b). If newcomer families are highly invested in their children's education, they are likely to be a great source of

support. Programs that involve and welcome students' parents and families have been shown to promote inclusion and improve educational outcomes for immigrant children as well (Safi, 2011; Suárez-Orozco et al., 2014). However, as discussed earlier, many newcomer families experience barriers to becoming involved with their children's schools. Teachers are able to bridge cultural gaps with their newcomer students' families and involve them in their child's learning by utilizing their home language and learning more about their life experiences (Hurley et al., 2014). Roy and Roxas (2011) support the value of forming strong relationships with families as well by stating that it can also help cut across the deficit-discourse, as teachers are able to learn more about their students and their lived experiences.

Social and Community Factors

Relationships and perceived social support are shown to support academic success while also protecting against anxiety and depression (Kia-Keating & Ellis, 2007; Kovacev, 2004; Suárez-Orozco, Pimentel & Martin, 2009). Relationships are important to, "bridge the gap between home and school cultures, provide feelings of safety and opportunities for success in the school setting, attenuate the effects of school violence and enhance feelings of belonging in the school setting" (Suárez-Orozco, Pimentel & Martin, 2009, p. 741). A school environment that fosters positive interactions through school programs and policies supports a sense of belonging while also improving academic engagement and achievement (Pryce et al., 2019). Further, providing access to leadership opportunities, tutoring, mentorship and extra-curriculars led to greater integration for newcomer students (Hopkins et al., 2013). School and community-based programs that provide opportunities for newcomer students and their native-born peers to build relationships help to promote acceptance and belonging (Crooks et al., 2021; Pieloch et al., 2016; Suárez-Orozco et al., 2009). McCloud (2015) found, in a study with nine students from Mexico,

Honduras and China, that creating spaces for students to help each other with translating or homework helped newcomers build social bonds and improve academic outcomes. Improving access to and providing opportunities for newcomers to participate in extra-curriculars has been seen to improve the experiences of newcomers in schools as well. Extra-curriculars in school improved African immigrants and refugees' feelings of connection and their attitudes towards school (Hamilton-Hinch et al., 2021; James, 2019). Allowing students the opportunity to share their talents and pursue their passions may allow students to see their identity reflected in a positive light and provides them with opportunities to form bonds with their peers. Providing children with opportunities for positive social interactions assists them in learning new value systems and developing social skills (Chen et al., 2005). Positive peer interactions serve to protect against the risk of loneliness and improves self-confidence (Gibson et al., 2011; Suárez-Orozco et al., 2008).

Ethnic communities have been shown to be a protective factor for newcomers and a vital part of positive integration at school as it provides a sense of collective identity and support (Bal & Arzubiaga, 2014). Teachers with immigrant backgrounds, or who are linguistically and culturally diverse themselves, may be able to better understand and relate to the experiences of their newcomer students. Research has documented that same-race teachers positively impact their students and as seen in their greater academic achievement and overall well-being (Cardichon et al., 2020; Chetty, Friedman & Rockoff, 2014; Opper, 2019). Having classmates of the same race or ethnicity has been seen to aid in more positive socioemotional development as, "[students] who have more same-race/ethnicity peers may find it easier to forge relationships with other children" (Brenner & Crosnoe, 2011, p. 640). Additionally, newcomer-serving organizations and community supports have been proven to promote resilience by providing a

safe place to build relationships with others that can relate to the same experiences (Edge et al., 2014). A similar finding was found when examining ESL programs because students shared that they like it was a 'safe haven' (McCloud, 2015). Creating partnerships between schools, mental health providers, and community agencies can help support newcomer adjustment as well (Li et al., 2017; Ratković et al., 2017). Selimos and George (2018) found that settlement agencies were a great source of support for newcomer youth in Windsor, Ontario. The agencies described in this study offered homework support, provided opportunities for extra-curricular activities, and access to counselling services. This was an important space for the newcomer students as participants shared that they felt they had formed strong bonds with the youth workers and that they were able to talk to mentors in a way they couldn't with parents or teachers.

School and Educational Factors

Selimos and Daniel (2017), conducted focus groups and interviews with 65 newcomer immigrant and refugee youth aged between 16- and 22-years old attending school in Canada. The researchers found that the supports the participants had access to at school led them to develop a deep attachment to their school. As discussed, schools play a crucial role in shaping the acculturative experiences of newcomer children and youth. The newcomer youth participants in this study echoed this sentiment as they described their schools as feeling like a second home and praised them for providing them with a sense of belonging. Connections with teachers have been observed as a protective factor for newcomer students as well. In a study involving South East Asian refugee students, the participants shared that because their teacher displayed positive perceptions of them, the students saw themselves in the same way (Thorstensson, 2013). Caring teachers were seen to be a protective factor, supporting the academic and social integration of five Sierra Leonean students from Davies (2008). The same was observed in an ethnographic

study of Burmese/Karenni refugees from Thailand. In this study, the teacher's kind disposition and inclusive efforts created a positive environment for students (Hos, 2016). When asked what advice they had to share with teachers working with newcomer students in a study by Smith and colleagues (2021), newcomer youth participants shared that teachers could help their students by being understanding, approachable and patient.

Teachers holding high academic and behaviour expectations of newcomer students were found to promote resilience. In fact, in a study by Oudghiri (2022), Latinx immigrant students attending the same school in a rural community, identified a positive teacher-student relationship was the most important factor in promoting positive integration and development. These students shared that they admired teachers who believed in their capabilities and conveyed mutual respect. They perceived the teacher's actions to be caring in the way the teacher was supportive, encouraging and offered to provide them with extra support outside of scheduled class time. Oudghiri (2022) concluded that in this case, positive student-teacher relationships increased students' attitudes towards school as well as their desire to attend and work hard to achieve success. Similarly, African students in Canada shared that having teachers who held high expectations of them were perceived to be invested in nurturing their overall well-being and went above and beyond to provide them with additional support when needed (Hamilton-Hinch et al., 2021; James, 2019; Kanu, 2008). As we see from these studies, teacher attitudes can directly impact academic engagement.

Multicultural and culturally responsive pedagogy and curriculum can contribute to a more positive school environment for newcomers (Fruja & Roxas, 2016). Culturally responsive pedagogy gained international recognition in a landmark study from Ladson-Billings (1994), which examined how teachers successfully engaged African American students through their

teaching practices. Culturally responsive pedagogy (CRP) aims to provide marginalized students equal access to education by honouring their culture, ways of knowing, and lived experiences (Ladson-Billings, 1995). This is important because incorporating newcomer children's previous knowledge, languages, and experiences in their learning also improves their academic outcomes (Croce, 2014; Fránquiz & Salinas, 2011; Bunar, 2019). As such, we see that teachers must actively look for ways to incorporate students' prior knowledge and create opportunities for students to share their lived experiences and cultural/linguistic backgrounds in order to make the learning environment more equitable (Bunar, 2019). Recognizing the cultural capital that newcomer students possess significantly influences their experiences at school and as such, teachers should create classroom environments where students' cultural backgrounds are honoured (Roy, 2015; Solano-Campos, 2017). Further, it is widely agreed that supporting the linguistic diversity of students fosters more positive educational outcomes and greater access to curriculum (Liu et al., 2017; Suárez-Orozco et al., 2014; Welply, 2017). Translanguaging allows students to strengthen their knowledge through the use of multiple languages while enabling socioemotional support and promoting social justice (Bunar, 2019). In considering the effects of globalization, the cross-cultural awareness and skills in communicating in multiple languages that immigrant students possess is a great strength in today's world (Guo-Brennan & Guo-Brennan, 2021). Taking a more holistic approach in nurturing their adaptation can be empowering for newcomer students, as they can experience seeing all aspects of their identity being valued and honored.

Language acquisition (achievement) has been noted to be a significant factor in predicting a child's achievement in school (Cheng & Yan, 2018). In general, newcomer students exhibit a strong desire to acquire English as they perceive mastering the language to be key to

integration within Canadian society (Selimos & Daniel, 2017). In a study investigating the experiences of Syrian refugee students in Canada, students expressed appreciation for the ESL classes as they saw a great benefit to the extra instruction (Ayoub & Zhou, 2023). Findings from Rossiter and colleagues (2015) supported this finding as immigrant and refugee youth participants shared gratitude for the support that their ESL teachers provided. Having less English-proficient students partner with more English-proficient students who also share the same home language has been found to be a positive strategy for both fostering connection and language support (García & Kleifgen, 2018). Having a strong grasp of a first language also assists in the acquisition of a second language (Bialystok, 2006; Genesee et al., 2010; Goldenberg, 2008). Therefore, students can benefit from continued use of and practice in their first language as this will strengthen their understanding of the new language (People for Education, 2017). Translanguaging has been observed to be a very effective pedagogical practice for integrating multilingual students. Translanguaging involves the use of multiple languages to support literacy learning (Gutierrez et al., 1999). As language is an inherent part of one's identity, encouraging the use of students' home language has been seen to increase pride and confidence among multilingual students (Cummins et al., 2005). Moinolnolki and Han (2017) state that allowing students to use multiple languages to supplement their learning is an evidence-based successful strategy which improves the integration of newcomers in the classroom. For instance, a study by Galante (2020) found that students who were exposed to translanguaging reported feeling 'normal' and included within their classroom community. As such, to implement more culturally relevant pedagogy and to support the inclusion of linguistically diverse students, it is critical for teachers and educational organizations to welcome and promote the practice and use of students' multiple languages.

Cultural and Societal Factors

The International Resilience Project (Ungar, 2006) has found that there are several culturally nested protective factors for resilience which include: religious affiliation, tolerance, having a life philosophy, strong cultural and/or spiritual identity, and being able to express one's cultural traditions through daily activities. However, many of these factors are dependent upon the host culture's attitudes towards diversity and inclusion. In the research literature, immigrant and refugee youth have consistently reported the need to maintain a balance between their national and ethnic identity to achieve healthy integration into their new country (Burgos et al., 2017). Providing social support, acceptance of cultural identity, and ample access to supports and resources on a societal level can improve the likelihood of positive adaptation and inclusion. Therefore, it could be argued that an additional cultural and societal factor would be the community's motivation to improve factors in all areas impacting a newcomer's capacity for resilience.

Policy Affecting the Educational Experiences of Newcomer Students

Educational Policy

Education research is positioned in the middle of the larger sociopolitical context and understanding the sociopolitical climate for newcomers facilitates better understanding of how educational research positions newcomer students (Oikonomidoy et al., 2019). OECD (2016) states:

> The policies and practices that countries design and implement to support immigrant students have a major influence on whether integration in the host communities is successful or not. How well immigrant students do at school is not only related to their attitudes, socioeconomic status, and prior education, but also to the quality and

receptiveness of the host country's education system. (p. 274)

Canada takes a multicultural approach to education that seeks to achieve inclusion for immigrant youth (Banks et al., 2016; May & Sleeter, 2010). However, researchers continue to search to understand the best way to implement supportive policies as studies conducted on examining the effectiveness of multicultural education policies have found very few demonstrable findings (Scott, 2013). Further, scholars criticize current multicultural approaches for being vague and ineffective (Warmington et al., 2018). In this way, multicultural approaches risk being performative in which they seem to target the correct goals but fail to enact meaningful supports, perpetuating the status quo for marginalized groups. How countries address their stance on immigration policies impacts their educational policies on inclusion, posing strong implications for students at school (Welply, 2020). For instance, national immigration policies develop legal frameworks that can establish barriers for newcomer students and their access to education (Welply, 2020). As increased immigration leads to increased diversity within our schools and classrooms, student inclusion and well-being become a larger focus for educational leaders and policymakers (Arnot et al., 2014). Therefore, how policymakers approach policies surrounding curriculum, funding, teacher recruitment and preparation, assessment, and language development has direct implications for newcomer students (Ybarra et al., 2016; Welply, 2020).

Inclusion has not been defined at a national policy level in Canada, and as such, each province and territory defines and sets out to achieve this differently (Towle, 2015). Debates surrounding inclusion for newcomer children reveal conflicting ideas about how to best include students in mainstream classes while providing ample access to supports. In examining how educational systems around the world place newcomer students in various learning environments, three common themes emerge (Bunar, 2019). First, students are sometimes placed

in a separate-site model (Short, 2002) where newcomer students learn together in their own schools. Some argue that these schools provide a supportive environment for newcomers as there is a focus on language acquisition and students have the chance to form bonds with peers who are going through similar experiences. Others say that this model is segregating, and researchers say that this type of segregation correlates with an achievement gap between immigrant and non-immigrant students (Brunello & De Paola, 2017; Rumberger & Palardy, 2005). Makarova and Birman (2016) state that inclusion can only be achieved if newcomer students can learn in a place that fosters strong connections with other students of differing backgrounds and provides them with the necessary supports to address their needs. Another model for integrating newcomer students is direct immersion. Direct immersion is utilized in most countries, particularly for younger children (Bunar, 2019). In this model, students are placed in a general classroom and are often pulled out of the class to receive additional support from a language teacher. Advocates for this model state that it is beneficial for inclusion and that students have the opportunity to learn more about the host culture from their peers (Suárez-Orozco et al., 2009). Others state that while this model appears to be inclusive and beneficial for newcomers, adequate supports, and funding to effectively implement this in schools is lacking. For instance, Taylor (2008) states that students do not often receive necessary supports from the general classroom teacher. Further, newcomer students may be subjected to racism, discrimination, and bullying if placed in schools that lack diversity, making it difficult for students to form meaningful bonds with others that share the same cultural background or speak the same language. Therefore, while students may be included in the physical space, there are often not enough supports in place to allow for inclusion on a meaningful level. Lastly, some institutions may place newcomer students in a separate class. This model is based on the notion that it is

beneficial for newcomer students to be placed within a general school, but still have access to language support and other children with migrant backgrounds as well (Bunar, 2019). This may be an effective way to introduce newcomers to school in their new country because they have the support of other students with similar backgrounds. However, Svensson and Eastmond (2013) state that students are often placed in these separate classes for much longer than they should be, which can limit their learning opportunities and delay opportunities for students to connect with other children. Additionally, the success of each model is compromised by the lack of sustainable policy to address gaps and maximize the effectiveness of the programs. Further, resources to support the transition of these students from separate classes to mainstream classes are often obsolete (Bunar, 2019). Integration can only be achieved by, "structuring support services in a manner that provides ample, regular opportunities for these students to interact with their peers in general classrooms, as opposed to … a manner that continually removes these students from the classroom community" (Scanlan et al., 2021, p. 10). As discussed earlier however, newcomer students can face a multitude of barriers and challenges when engaging with non-immigrant youth aside from just language barriers. Each of these three models place pressure on newcomer students to acquire English without discussing the role of non-immigrant students in assisting the inclusion of newcomers. Considering acculturation is a dual-process, perhaps research should seek to address how to engage non-immigrant youth in promoting inclusion within their schools and communities. Non-immigrant youth can learn more about the world and how it operates when they have classmates that can share unique perspectives, worldviews, and lived experiences within the classroom community. Non-immigrant youth, then, have the opportunity to become more informed global citizens, which is an asset in today's

globalized world. Therefore, it would be beneficial for everyone to establish educational policy that welcomes and includes diversity.

It is particularly important to consider how language policy affects the educational experiences and inclusion of newcomers in schools as it guides the teachers' instruction (Yoon, 2022). In Canada, language policies in education continue to favor English and French dominance over other languages (Haque & Patrick, 2015). Language policy will continue to hold power over newcomers as long as they continue to not be valued for their emergent multilingualism (Gourd, 2007). A critical approach to language calls for, "leveraging the languages and voices of minoritized students as a way to destabilize and decolonize inequitable power structures" (Lau, 2022, p. 1). Monolinguistic language policies are inequitable because they severely restrict linguistically diverse students' access to curriculum and limits their ability to express their knowledge and lived experiences. Yoon (2022) states that language policy needs to be improved to allow multilingual learners access to meaningful learning opportunities.

Perceptions of Stakeholders

As discussed, teachers hold beliefs and implicit biases that directly affect the experiences of students in school. Teacher education programs therefore play a critical role in engaging preservice teachers to interrogate their positionality and, "popular problematic narratives" (Faltis & Valdés, 2016, p. 570). Valenzuela (2016) states that while teacher education programs have worked to develop courses that focus on language learning and cultural competency, these programs are usually only accessible to those seeking additional qualifications. Cultural competency may also become problematic when they are brief, infrequent, and disconnected from real lived experience (Guo et al., 2009). More understanding in how to prepare teachers for working with diverse students is critical as teachers have the power to make decisions that will

affect the educational experiences, trajectories, and outcomes for students based on their own beliefs and conceptions. Lund and Lee (2018) state that bolstering critical awareness on power and privilege in preservice teachers through the use of a social justice framework can work to counter deficit-model thinking.

Goodwin (2010) proposes that a framework of "knowledge domains" can serve to disrupt the perpetuation of harmful teacher beliefs by requiring teachers to take part in critical questioning and reflection. The first domain asks that teachers confront their beliefs and assumptions. The next domain seeks to assist teachers in seeing the importance of gaining a holistic understanding of their learners. Then, the framework prompts teachers to implement a culturally responsive curriculum that builds on the needs and interests of students. Lastly, the framework calls for teachers to promote social justice in how they recognize and respond to inequity. Several researchers support the foundational principles of this model in improving professional development opportunities for teachers. Teachers need to participate in learning activities that foster a sense of cultural humility (Tinkler & Tinkler, 2016) and require teachers to examine their own biases (Kirkland, 2014). These practices can help shift the mindset of teachers from a deficit-based lens to one that is more able to recognize strength-based assets and resilience. Additionally, because teachers with an immigrant background hold fewer negative perceptions of newcomer students and are better able to relate to their lived experiences, efforts to recruit more diverse teachers would improve school policies (Oxman-Martinez & Choi, 2014).

Teachers must also be encouraged to examine how larger educational structures and policies serve to disadvantage students. When teachers actively implement CRP in their teaching practices, they help to push back against the institutionalized structures and policies that restrict learning opportunities and outcomes or marginalized students (Ladson-Billings, 1995). Further,

they also instill students with the ability to recognize and critique the social inequities that educational and societal policies are built upon. However, studies indicate that teachers have not been prepared to address diversity, social justice, and culturally relevant pedagogy in impactful ways (Goodwin & Chen, 2016; Goodwin et al., 2014).

Mechanisms of Inclusion and Exclusion

Injustice and inequity can be reinforced in schools through educational policy (Guo-Brennan & Guo-Brennan, 2018). Oikonomidoy (2014) states that more efforts should be made in regard to how schools can establish more effective school-based strategies and policies to facilitate the inclusion of immigrant and refugee youth. Researchers agree that there remains a paucity in the literature regarding evidence-based practices that can support the integration of newcomer students (Block et al., 2014; Moinolnolki & Han, 2017). The voice of immigrant and refugee youth is scarce in the research literature, and scholars argue that working with newcomers would improve issues with integration, and lead to more informed and effective policies (Solomon & Singer, 2011; Leblanc, 2017; Guo-Brennan & Guo-Brennan, 2018). By 2036, half of all Canadians could be an immigrant or the child of an immigrant (Statistics Canada, 2017). Despite the increasing population of immigrant and refugee children in Canada, there remains uncertainty in how teachers, educational leaders, and policymakers can support them. Efforts should continue to be channeled into learning more about how schools can establish school-based policies for eliminating barriers to inclusion (Oikonomidoy, 2014). A stronger stance when it comes to policymaking towards inclusion can improve how inclusivity is perceived in our institutions and society (Schlein et al., 2021).

Gaps in the Literature

Studies examining the experiences of immigrant and refugee youth acclimating to school in Canada show that newcomer students face a multitude of challenges and barriers that threaten positive inclusion and integration. These challenges include social exclusion, racial discrimination, stress and anxiety, a lack of mental health resources, under-resourced schools and learning environments, language barriers, culture shock, and more. The research literature more frequently examines the in-school barriers for newcomer students in comparison to the in-school sources of support. Oikonomidoy et al. (2019) argues that this could be indicative of the fact that in-school sources of support for newcomers are limited. On the other hand, continuing to emphasize the barriers and challenges that newcomers face perpetuates an image that causes teachers and other educational stakeholders to view them as a problem. As discussed, this view restricts their educational outcomes and severely harms their sense of self. If schools are to be a neutral space where all can achieve success, the perceptions of those who hold power over one's trajectories and outcomes need to be equitable. Educational research has only just begun to recognize the power the resiliency framework has to challenge the dominant deficit discourse; however, this has not been widespread (Oikonomidoy et al., 2019). Studies are more recently beginning to examine how immigrant and refugee youth utilize internal strength, agency, optimism, and determination to cope with the challenges of migration. Further, newcomers benefit from the support of family, peers, teachers, and their communities when all aspects of their identity are recognized and honoured. As such, schools continue to be an important piece of the puzzle to examine when determining how best to support newcomer students.

Many of the studies in this area have focused on the experience of newcomers in secondary school education and little is known about the experiences of younger children acclimating to school in a new country during their most formative years. Further, to better

support the transition of newcomer students, a stronger understanding of the experiences of newcomer children is critical. Newcomer is an umbrella term, sometimes used interchangeably to refer to immigrants, refugees, or students with differing migration backgrounds. As such, the research literature is complicated by the use of different terms to refer to these children. These varying definitions produce an inconsistent understanding about newcomers, their academic outcomes, and their educational experiences. In recent years, researchers are increasingly engaging youth by including their voice and having them share their stories. Learning from the first-hand perspectives of this population allows us to gain a deeper and more realistic understanding of their experiences. As the research reveals, Canada has not done enough to promote equitable development and learning opportunities for marginalized communities and our educational systems continue to restrict their educational opportunities and pathways.

Theoretical Framework

Resilience

Since the early 1970s, research on resilience has been seen across disciplines concerning early childhood development including psychology, psychiatry, pediatrics, and education (Masten & Barnes, 2018). In their commentary of resilience research in children, Masten and Barnes (2018) state that despite the varying definitions of resilience throughout the years, many consistent findings have been demonstrated. Research on resilience has been shaped by three core questions, and the challenges presented in the table below are not an exhaustive list as a wide range of adverse experiences have been researched in studies of resilience (Masten & Barnes, 2018). Determining the challenges helps to explain the risk factors, examining how an individual is coping involves using criteria to assess how they are adapting and the asking what processes support success reveals promotive or protective factors (Masten & Barnes, 2018).

Table 1

Core questions shaping the research literature on resilience

What are the Challenges?	How is the Person Doing?	What Processes Support Success?
Trauma	Developmental tasks	Neurobiological
Neglect	Mental health	Behavioural
Adverse Childhood	Physical health	Familial and relational
Experiences (ACEs)	Happiness	Community
Poverty	Work achievement	Cultural
Natural Disaster	Caregiving	Societal
War		

Note. Adapted from *Resilience in children: Developmental perspectives*, by A. S. Masten & A. J. Barnes, 2018, *Children, 5*(7), p. 98. https://doi.org/10.3390/children5070098. Copyright 2018, by the authors.

When the concept of resilience first emerged as a psychological phenomenon, it was originally meant to describe one's ability to overcome challenges and adversity (Ungar, 2006). A key component in assessing resilience in children is being able to observe behaviours that show they are adapting positively despite the presence of significant adversity (Masten et al., 2009). In recent years, researchers have increasingly recognized the role of culture, community, and connections to other people. Ungar (2012) defines resilience as, "both an individual's capacity to navigate health resources and a condition of the individual's community and culture to provide these resources in culturally meaningful ways" (p. 5). Resilience is seen as a two-dimensional phenomenon in which one's capacity to overcome challenge is greatly influenced by their relationships to other people through external systems (Masten &Barnes, 2018). Kirmayer (2014) supports this by stating that resilience develops because of, "social processes that reside in relationships among people, systems and institutions at the level of families, neighborhoods, communities, and organizations, governments and transitional networks" (p. vii). For all children, the relationships they have with people in their homes and communities serve as supports protecting against the risk of adversity. This extends to schools as they are a major

source of socialization for children. Sibley and Brabeck (2017) emphasize the important role of schools as well by stating that, “in this view, a well-resourced, stable environment, such as a high-quality school, allows the child’s internal strengths and talents to contribute to positive educational outcomes” (p. 140). Further, “the more a child is exposed to adversity… the more the child’s resilience depends on the quality of the environment (rather than individual qualities)” (Ungar et al., 2013, p. 350). As such, schools are environments that can either support or hinder students’ resiliency. Considering the context of the environment and how it impacts one’s resilience is important because often systemic inequalities and barriers perpetuate adversity for marginalized individuals. Howell and Voronka (2012) state that resilience models act as “a technology of looking inward” (p. 4-5) in which they emphasize how individuals cope and adapt to challenges without recognizing or questioning systemic inequalities and barriers. Putting emphasis on individuals being strong and resilient without actually addressing the structural causes of the adversity they face severely impacts our understanding of how structures and policies can be improved to eliminate inequalities. Additionally, “aside from making individuals the locus of change, music of this individualized discourse on resilience suggests that there is a right way to adapt to risk” (Mahdiani & Ungar, 2021, p. 147). Therefore, a hyperfocus on individual resilience may cause individuals to be condemned for their inability to cope and adapt without understanding the complexity of the challenges they are facing. Further, “the term resilience can be misused to mask structural and psychological problems” (Mahdiani & Ungar, 2021, p. 152). As such, it is imperative to examine how power relations and systemic factors perpetuate and protect structural inequalities in order to eliminate barriers and improve policies, supports, and interventions.

Resilience studies have shown that how much adversity an individual is exposed to will make a difference in their capacity to be resilient, but also that individuals facing similar levels of risk show variation in their adaptation (Evans et al., 2013; Felitti et al., 1998; Masten, 2014; Masten & Cicchetti, 2016). Additionally, the effects of adversity can pose varying levels of risk depending on how the timing of adverse events align with different stages of growth and development (Masten & Cicchetti, 2016). For example, enduring adversity in early childhood can negatively affect brain development (Huebner et al., 2016) and the development of self-regulation skills (Vernon-Feagans et al., 2016). However, some forms of stress have been seen to be beneficial for child development as experience in successfully overcoming challenges leads to developing adaptive skills and strategies (Masten & Cicchetti, 2016). As such, there has been a greater focus in professions in the field of child development to focus more on positive resilience goals, models, and measures rather than on risk and vulnerability (Masten, 2011). Despite growing calls to equip child development workers and professionals with skills that align with trauma-informed care, Masten and Barnes (2018) declare that resilience-informed care is just as important so individuals and families can improve their capacity to overcome adversity. In the field of resilience research, we see a parallel to the notion of deficit-based and asset-based thinking as discussed earlier in this review.

Promotive and Protective Factors. Assessing and measuring one's capacity for resilience continues to be a complex task in the field of resilience science and research. (Masten & Barnes, 2018). While resilience cannot be seen as a personality trait, individuals use different cognitive skills that can contribute to greater adaptive capacity (Masten & Barnes, 2018). Masten and Barnes (2018) state that the central goal of resilience studies is to assess what factors support one's capability to overcome the challenges they face. As such, the International Resilience

Project (IRP), founded by Dr. Michael Ungar, sought to examine how young people around the world cope during times of challenge (2006). The IRP's team of researchers saw that resilience relates to four ecologically nested aspects of one's life, as seen in the table below. These factors are known to be promotive or protective and address the core question of resilience research by explaining what helps.

Table 2

Promotive factors that facilitate resilience

A. Individual factors:	**B. Relationship factors:**
• Assertiveness • Problem-solving • Self-efficacy • Coping despite uncertainty • Self-awareness • Perceived social support • Positive outlook • Empathy for others • Having goals and aspirations • Showing a balance between independence and dependence • Appropriate use of, or abstinence from, substances like alcohol and drugs • Humour • Sense of duty (to others or self)	• Parenting that meets the child's needs • Appropriate emotional expression and parental monitoring within the family • Social competence • Positive mentors and role models • Meaningful relationships with others at school and home • Perceived social support • Peer group acceptance
C. Community factors:	**D. Cultural factors:**
• Opportunities for age-appropriate work • Avoidance of exposure to violence • Government support • Meaningful rights of passage with appropriate amounts of risk • Safety and security • Perceived social equity • Access to school and education	• Affiliation with a religious organization • Tolerance of different ideologies and beliefs • Adequate management of cultural dislocation or shifts in values • Self-betterment • Having a life philosophy • Cultural and/or spiritual identification • Being culturally grounded

Note. Adapted from *The International Resilience Project*, by M. Ungar, 2006, p. 5.

Culture and context are important themes among these promotive factors. Ungar and colleagues (2016) state that, "culture is understood to be the customs, traditions, languages, and social interactions that provide identity conclusions for individuals and groups" and, "context, as different from culture, is understood to be the social, temporal, and geographic location in which culture is manifested" (p. 5). Culture and context are important factors to consider because they influence family values, behavioural expectations, and socialization. Interest in this aspect of resilience has been growing as understanding how cultural variations can lead to a greater understanding of promotive factors (Theron et al., 2015). Interventions that have been developed with a focus on culture and context can maximize promotive and protective factors (Masten & Barnes, 2018; Masten, 2011, 2014).

Educational researchers have been encouraged to examine how newcomers utilize agency in order to disrupt the dominant deficit-discourse (Oikonomidoy et al., 2019). In light of growing calls for more asset-based research pertaining to the experiences of newcomers, research has begun to recognize, more and more, the resilience of this population. For example, studies on young immigrants and refugees have examined how they utilize individual characteristics and coping strategies as they endure the challenges that come along with migration and resettlement (Betancourt & Khan, 2008; Este & Van Ngo, 2011). The same studies have observed that positive relationships with family members and a sense of belonging in the school community were seen to promote resilience as well. Having access to positive role models was seen to be a contributing factor to the success of immigrant students (Gaytan et al., 2007). Pickren (2014) found that the maintenance of cultural practices and identity appeared to be an important resource for resilience. While research on the resilience in newcomers has increased in recent years, more understanding is required from the perspectives of children themselves.

Critical Race Theory (CRT)

Critical Race Theory (CRT) has been applied to research in a multitude of fields including law, social sciences, humanities, ethnic and women's studies, and education (see Aguirre, 2000; Crenshaw et al., 1995; Delgado, 1995; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Lynn et al., 2002; Matsuda et al., 1993; Parker et al., 1998; Solórzano, 1997, 1998). CRT aims to challenge dominant beliefs that have been maintained through the power and privilege of white people (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). Further, CRT examines how race and racism permeate through society's foundational structures, processes, and discourses (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). Because CRT holds that racism is ingrained within all aspects of our society, mainstream classroom practices often reinforce oppression pertaining to class, race, and gender (DeCuir-Gunby et al., 2013).

"CRT represents a paradigm shift in discourse about race and racism in education" (Smith-Maddox & Solórzano, 2002, p. 3). Further, in education, CRT seeks to recognize and confront the structures that advantage some, while disadvantaging others, in educational spaces (Matsuda et al., 1993). Where schools are supposed to be neutral sites where everyone can achieve success if they work hard, CRT brings to light injustices as seen in the widening achievement gap of racialized youth, perpetuation of racial assumptions, monolinguistic language policies, and assimilative curriculum. CRT allows for a greater understanding of race that transcends deficit-based thinking (Valencia, 1997; Solórzano, 1997). Therefore, counterstories are necessary tools to illuminate the lived experiences and bring about collective change.

Counterstorytelling. Personal narratives are a tool for unravelling "the complex intersection of identity factors that inform diverse perspectives" and "allows for more accurate

descriptions of lived reality" (Liggett, 2013, p. 9). Delgado (1989) uses the term, 'counterstories' to describe the narratives of oppressed and marginalized people. Solórzano and Yosso (2002) define counterstorytelling as a "method of telling the stories of those people whose experiences are not often told" (p. 26). CRT states that this is important because dominant narratives are built upon discriminatory and inequitable assumptions, and when these dominant narratives go unquestioned, racial injustice is preserved. Because counterstories give voice to those whose voice has been largely ignored, they have the power to disrupt the challenge quo and disorient societal assumptions. As such, counterstories can be seen as a tool for facilitating social, political, and cultural cohesion (Merriweather Hunn et al., 2006). In education, counterstories can serve as powerful evidence of resilience and can illuminate how institutionalized power structures privilege some while disadvantaging others (Bell, 2003). For example, American immigrant students have used counterstories as a tool to tell their own experiences of immigration and to "complicate dominant narratives of American national identity—narratives of facile assimilation, meritocracy, and linear trajectories" (Ghiso & Low, 2013, p. 26). As such, "counterstories do not aim to provide a truer understanding of truth, but rather complicate our understanding of 'truth'" (Atwood & López, 2014, p., 145).

Crenshaw (1993) developed the notion of intersectionality to capture how the dimensions of one's identity are fluid and the need to account for multiple dimensions when attempting to understand the social construction of one's reality. Liggett (2010) argues that personal experience is an important part of identity construction and fosters a stronger understanding of the interconnections between identity factors. Rooted in CRT, Yosso (2005) introduced the notion of community cultural wealth in which marginalized students possess funds of cultural knowledge, skills, abilities, and contacts. This concept facilitates teachers to better serve their

students by acknowledging the strengths they possess as, “this CRT approach to education involves a commitment to develop schools that acknowledge the multiple strengths of Communities of Colour in order to serve a larger purpose of struggle toward social and racial justice” (Yosso, 2005, p. 69). The concept of community cultural wealth was introduced in response to the prevalent deficit-discourse surrounding racialized students. This model proposes that there are six forms of cultural wealth including aspirational capital, linguistic capital, familial capital, social capital, navigational capital, and resistant capital. Aspirational capital acknowledges the hopes and dreams that students hold in spite of the barriers that limit their outcomes. Linguistic capital refers to the multiple language and communication skills students possess. Next, familial capital consists of cultural knowledges and feelings of kinship towards others. Then, social capital consists of peer contacts and social bonds. Navigational capital is thought of as the ability to navigate through social institutions, even when the environment is hostile. Finally, resistant capital refers to the inclination to fight back against inequalities. Counterstories allow students to recognize and reflect upon their own forms of cultural wealth. Personal narratives challenge the predominant deficit-discourse surrounding the experience of individuals from marginalized groups to put forth a more accurate depiction of one’s lived reality.

Chapter 3

Methodology

Qualitative research studies seek to understand the perspective and lived experiences of the participants (McMillan & Schumacher, 1997; Patton, 2002). Considering the aim of this study is to seek to understand how newcomer children experience school while acclimating to life in a new country, the nature of this study must, therefore, be qualitative. Since the research questions guiding this study are open-ended, qualitative research is well-suited for the aims of this study (Creswell, 2018). Patton (2002) states that "exploratory research" (p.139) is an approach to qualitative research that is especially appropriate where little work has been done in the field of study. This study, therefore, aims to discover the themes and patterns of how the participants describe their experience (Marshall & Rossman, 1995). In this chapter, I describe phenomenology and how it applies to the research study. Next, I outline the procedures involved with the study including: recruitment, data collection, analysis, and ethical considerations.

Phenomenology

Phenomenological research first emerged in the fields of philosophy and psychology (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Researchers utilizing this design of inquiry share how participants describe their own experiences with a phenomenon, seeking to capture the essence of the phenomenon through the participants' collective accounts (Giorgi 2009; Moustakas, 1994). Moran states that "part of the enduring appeal of phenomenology is that it respects the centrality and ineliminability of the *first-person* point of view, the first and primary standpoint from which humans encounter the world" (2018, p. 81). Thus, a main focus in phenomenological studies is to understand one's "lived experience" (Van Manen, 2014, p. 26). Considering the voice of newcomer children is largely absent from much of the research literature, phenomenology lends

itself well to this study as the research questions seek to gain insight into what these acculturative experiences are like from the viewpoint of those who experience it. In educational settings, phenomenological research strives to embody the lived experiences of individuals and their perceptions and feelings about a phenomenon (Husserl, 1970; Moustakas, 1994). Max van Manen (1990) stated:

> The essence of a phenomenon is a universal which can be described through a study of the structure that governs the instances or particular manifestations of the essence of that phenomenon…A universal or essence may only be intuited or grasped through a study of the particulars or instances as they are encountered in lived experiences. (p. 10)

This study is phenomenological in nature as it seeks to learn about the experience of newcomer students in-depth and from their perspective. Phenomenology is, "based on the study of life experiences, regarding an event, from the subject's perspective" (Fuster, 2019, p. 2). In this case, the event is attending a new school in Canada as described through the perspective of newcomer children.

Case Study Methodology

The case study approach is used to attain an in-depth understanding of a small number of individuals or situations (Patton, 2002) and as such, focuses on rich descriptions of a particular case (Stake, 2013). Yin (2009) states that "the distinctive need for case studies arises out of the desire to understand complex social phenomena" (p. 4). Case study research requires the researcher to explore, "a bounded system (a case) or multiple bounded systems (cases) over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information…and reports a case description and case-based themes" (Creswell, 2018, p. 53). Merriam (1998) states that case study research is particularistic (focuses on a particular phenomenon); descriptive (provides

a rich, thick description of the studied phenomenon); and it is heuristic (the reader gains deeper understanding of the phenomenon). The phenomenon under study is the experience of acculturation in Canadian elementary public schools as described by those who experience it. Attaining multiple perspectives on a shared phenomenon is advantageous because the multiple perspectives produce a thick description (Geertz, 1973). Stake (2013) states that fewer than four cases may limit the benefits of a case study approach but that using a sample of less than four cases is acceptable if utilized purposefully. As such, this research study collected data from five participants. The multiple perspective case study approach was utilized in order to explore and examine the participants' actions, thoughts, and perceptions (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006) to develop meaning and understanding from these views (Stake, 1994).

Common strategies for gathering qualitative data in case study research include interviews, observations, and document analysis (Burton & Batlett, 2005; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Interviews are highly beneficial in qualitative research as they allow participants to express their thoughts, feelings, experiences, perspectives, and opinions (Cohen et al., 2011; Yin, 1994). Further, interviews are used "to explore people's interpretations and meanings of events and situations, and their symbolic and cultural significance" (Punch, 2009, p. 149). Semi-structured interviews are a flexible strategy in which the researcher follows an uncategorized set of questions, allowing conversation between the researcher and participant to flow naturally (Bryman, 2008). Prior to beginning each semi-structured interview, participants were invited to complete a drawing task will be discussed in more detail below.

There are three types of case studies: intrinsic, instrumental, and collective, which are "distinguished by the size of the bounded case, such as whether the case involves one individual, several individuals, a group, an entire program, or an activity" (Creswell, 2007, p. 74). Multiple

case studies are collective in that research is conducted to gain in-depth insight of the research topic (Creswell, 2007; Johnson & Christensen, 2008), both within and across cases (Punch, 2009). Therefore, this case study is collective because it seeks to understand both the phenomenon, and how the participants experience it. The case study approach correlates with the tenets of CRT because it centers on the experiences of racialized communities. Additionally, learning from the perspectives of participants can challenge the dominant ways of thinking (Smith-Maddox & Solórzano, 2002). This methodology also helps to provide insight into the differences and similarities among the cases, as the participants in this study attended different public elementary schools in British Columbia and Ontario. Further, the students migrated to Canada from four different countries which may contribute to similarities and differences in how they perceive and experience the phenomenon.

Participants and Setting

In qualitative research, phenomenological studies seek to gain in-depth insight from individuals who have firsthand experience of the phenomenon under study. Therefore, selecting "information rich" (Patton, 2002) cases is critical for gaining this insight. Purposeful sampling involves recruiting individuals who can share their deep understanding of, and experience with, the phenomenon (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). Further, purposeful sampling is used to select cases based on their ability to answer the research questions (Teddlie & Yu, 2007). Criterion sampling is a type of purposeful sampling that involves studying "all cases that meet some predetermined criterion of important" (Patton, 2002, p. 238). Since this study examines the experiences of newcomer children in Canada, participants were required to be landed immigrants who have lived in Canada for less than five years, as per the definition used by Statistics Canada. Criterion sampling was used to recruit participants via newcomer settlement and community

organizations. This included newcomer group pages on social media (i.e. Facebook). Snowball sampling was also used to recruit additional participants. Snowball sampling involves having participants refer others who might as well meet the criteria (Silverman, 2011). Silverman (2011) states that snowball sampling allows the researcher to access potential participants that might otherwise be difficult to reach, and that participants may be more likely to participate since they were referred by someone they know or trust. The criterion as part of this study included: a) having arrived in Canada within the last five years, b) attending public school in grades 1-7 and c) English language proficiency. At the onset of this study, recruitment specifically targeted newcomer children in grades 1-3. However, due to recruitment challenges, this criterion was expanded to include grades 1-7. In Canada, elementary school typically includes grades 1-8 but this varies by province or territory. In Ontario, for example, secondary school begins in grade nine, whereas secondary school in British Columbia begins in grade eight. As such, recruitment did not occur beyond grade seven to ensure that all participants, across provinces, attended elementary school. Participants were required to have an adequate level of English language proficiency so they would be able to verbally express their opinions and share their experiences with the researcher. Participants were recruited with the requirement of having arrived in Canada within the last five years to align with the definition used by the Canadian government for the collection of demographic, population, and census information. Lastly, interested participants were required to volunteer and express their willingness to participate in the study.

This study recruited participants in both Ontario and British Columbia. According to Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC), Ontario, Quebec, and British Columbia saw the highest number of immigrants in 2020, with most immigrants tending to settle in the major urban centers including Toronto, Vancouver, and Montreal (Jurcik et al., 2019). In small sample

groups, it is important that the sample represents the larger population of the study topic (Bryman, 2008; Cohen et al., 2011; Johnson & Christensen, 2008). Immigrants to Canada arrive from many different countries. Immigrants in Ontario and British Columbia arrive from a wide range of countries, are working-age adults (25-54 years-old), and a significant proportion have children (Statistics Canada, 2022b). In 2020, the top ten source countries for immigrants to Canada were India, China, The Philippines, Nigeria, The United States, Pakistan, Syria, Eritrea, South Korea, and Iran (IRCC, 2020). As such, diverse stratification was used to recruit participants that reflect a true proportion of the population. The participants of this study were five newcomer children, aged seven to 13. They arrived in Canada from India, China, Iran, and South Korea, and all had resettled in Canada within the past five years.

Table 3

Participant Demographic Information

Participant*	Age	Grade	Years in Canada	Migration History	Host City
Catherine	13	7	>1 year	Family emigrated from Korea for education/job opportunities	Kingston, ON
Zafir	7	1	>1 year	Family emigrated from India for education/job opportunities	Surrey, BC
Steven	9	4	>1 year	Family emigrated from China for education/job opportunities	Surrey, BC
Soroush	10	5	3 years	Family emigrated from Iran for education/job opportunities	North Vancouver, BC
Rachel	13	7	>1 year	Family emigrated from China for education/job opportunities	Surrey, BC

Note. Participant names are pseudonyms.

Recruitment occurred from March 1, 2022, to February 2023. An informational email and letter were emailed to staff at several settlement and community organizations located

throughout the greater Toronto and Metro Vancouver areas. Settlement and community organizations were contacted on the basis of offering supports and programs to newcomer families and immigrant children. The informational email and letter asked for assistance in recruiting participants and outlined the purpose and rationale behind the study, as well as the criteria for participation. One resource centre responded with interest and proposed meeting in-person to discuss the details of the study. This organization helps connect women and families to support concerning violence and abuse, parenting, financial services, housing, health and wellness, and immigration. I met with the executive director and resource centre coordinator to discuss the methods of data collection, confidentiality protocols, participant criterion, and incentives for participants. The resource centre coordinator informally shared details of the study with potential participants and one participant expressed their interest and willingness to participate. Between November 1, 2022 and February 28, 2023, recruitment also occurred via social media (e.g., newcomer community Facebook groups) and information was shared outlining the study's purpose and criteria for participation. During this time, I posted twice to four different newcomer community Facebook groups. My second round of posts generated significant activity, but many did not respond past their initial response expressing interest in participating. However, I was able to attain two participants via social media and one of which was able to refer two additional participants. All participants were sent the same email that outlined the purpose of the study and included the Letter of Information and Consent Form (Appendix A) as well as the data collection protocols (Appendix B). Participants received this information one week prior to beginning the study, and consent and assent were obtained before beginning the data collection. As a token of my gratitude, participants were able to select either a $25 VISA or Walmart gift card upon scheduling each of the three interviews.

Data Collection

Data was collected via three semi-structured interviews with each participant. Interviews were conducted either in-person or virtually via Zoom and lasted approximately 30 minutes. One participant requested that interviews be held in person and the other four participants requested virtual interviews. A private room at the public library was selected as the setting for the participant requesting in-person interviews as it was convenient and accessible for the participant. As the participants were children under 13 years old, participants were able to have their legal guardian be present with them during the interviews. The interview protocol and drawing task was provided to the participants' legal guardians one week prior to each interview to build trust with the guardians and allow the participants to think about their thoughts and opinions prior to the interview. Interviews began with questions surrounding the participants' drawing task which helped to build rapport with the participants. The drawing tasks prompted participants to draw images of their schools and classrooms, and to depict how they felt while they were at school and the factors that contributed to their perceptions of school. From there, participants were generally asked the same questions in the same order to facilitate analysis of the data across all participants. Follow-up questions were asked to clarify information or generate more conversation.

To counter the potential power-based relationship between the interviewer and the interviewee (Clark, 2010; Einarsdottir, 2010; Theobald et al., 2011) and the challenge of engaging young children in the interview process, researchers have suggested drawings to encourage children to express themselves (Theobald et al., 2011; Groundwater-Smith et al., 2015). Visual methods encourage children to express what they experience by promoting more meaningful engagement compared to more traditional tasks such as interviews or surveys,

especially for children who do not share the same language proficiency as the researcher (Barley & Russell, 2019; Didkowsky et al., 2010). As such, drawing tasks were selected as a tool to build rapport with the child participants, and to account for potential limitations.

Participants were asked to complete a drawing task prior to beginning each of the three interviews. Arts-based research has been increasingly used as a method for enhancing our understanding of one's experiences (Ball & Gilligan, 2010; Cole & Knowles, 2011). Drawing tasks were used to assist in engaging the child participants and to help account for potential linguistic and/or communication barriers between myself and the participants. For research pertaining to immigrant and refugee children, studies relying on conventional research methods and textual expressions to collect data in dominant languages alone may fail to capture the complexities of the participants lived experiences (Guruge et al., 2015). Also, these research methods may be at risk of further perpetuating the deficit narrative of immigrants and refugees (Guruge, et al., 2015). To combat this, arts-informed methods were used for they deemed to be useful when there are linguistic and/or communication barriers between the researcher and the participants (Pauwels, 2010; Prosser, 2011; Rose, 2012). Participants were asked to draw pictures of themselves at school, what their school and classroom environment are like, and what they experience and/or feel while at school. Interviews began with the participants describing their drawings and the feelings they experienced while completing the task to prevent misinterpretation. Giving the children opportunities to be collaborators in the inquiry, rather than objects of research, recognizes the value of these participants as competent and active actors in their environment (Clark, 2017; Mason & Danby, 2011). This also contributes to disrupting the deficit discourse surrounding the experiences of newcomers (Davy et al., 2014; Roxas et al., 2017; Yohani, 2008).

Patton (2002) suggested that three interviews with each of the research participants should be conducted to collect in-depth phenomenological data. As such, three 30-minute semi-structured interviews were conducted with each newcomer child. The interviews were conducted approximately one to two weeks apart depending on the participant's schedule and availability. Moustakas (1994) proposes that the first phenomenological interviews can begin as a conversational interview that aims to learn about the participant and build trust. Considering this, the first interview asked the student to share general information about themselves and their family, as well as about their experiences moving to Canada and beginning school. Questions asked during the second interview sought to gain insight into what the experience was like for participants adjusting to school in a new country. They asked participants to identify the challenges they encountered, as well as where they found sources of support. In the third interview, questions sought to understand how they perceived their school environments, as well as how they think they were received in the new environment.

Interview questions were informed by The Child and Youth Resilience Measure (CRYM). The CRYM is one of the most widely used measures in youth resilience studies (Masten & Barnes, 2018). The CRYM was developed by a team of researchers at 14 research sites across five continents. They developed a qualitative interview schedule after reviewing the literature and other measurement tools pertaining to youth resilience. "The inclusion of non-western researchers, child advocates, and front-line practitioners in the design of the CYRM meant that it contained many items that have not been the focus of western-based resilience research to date" (Ungar, 2006, p. 7). The CRYM was used as a guide to create interview questions that would help to understand how the participants were adjusting by examining their self-esteem, sense of connectedness and belonging, and hope for the future.

Data Analysis

To determine and describe the experiences of newcomer students, a hybrid process of both inductive and deductive thematic analysis was used. In phenomenological research, analyzing significant statements leads to identifying meaning units and develops an "essence description" (Moustakas, 1994). Thematic analysis lends itself well to this phenomenological study because of its focus on interpreting meaning in the data. For instance, thematic analysis is described as "a search for themes that emerge as being important to the description of the phenomenon (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006, p. 82). Further, thematic analysis is flexible in that it can be applied to a wide range of qualitative data, including visual drawings (Creswell, 2013).

Data analysis occurred throughout data collection and concluded in late March 2023. As interviews were transcribed, I identified and recorded preliminary words, phrases and/or themes in a research journal. As described in the theoretical framework and methodology, I was committed to emphasizing the voice of the newcomer participants and honouring their lived experiences. Therefore, In Vivo coding was selected for first cycle coding because it draws upon the participant's own language (Saldaña, 2016). Saldaña (2016) states that In Vivo coding is particularly useful in educational studies involving youth as, "the child and adolescent voices are often marginalized, and coding with their actual words enhances and deepens an adult's understanding of their cultures and worldviews" (2016, p. 106). Thus, In Vivo coding was helpful in ensuring that I emphasized the participants' perspectives without imposing my own bias. As discussed, the voice of newcomer children and youth continue to largely be absent from the literature. By using the participants' own voice, researchers "are more likely to capture the meanings inherent in people's experience" (Stringer, 2014, p. 140). Butler-Kisber (2010) states

that phenomenological research requires researchers to extract important verbatim statements from transcripts, construct meaning from the statements and then recognize patterns between these interpretations to form clusters and identify themes.

Once data collection had been completed, all interview transcripts were reviewed to check for spelling errors and to ensure any personally identifying information was removed. Data cleaning occurred so that any unnecessary and irrelevant terms were removed from the transcripts (such as umm, uh, like, so yeah). Data cleaning is important as it ensures that data files are accurate, concise, and ready for analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2021). At the end of the third interview, participants were given the chance to take part in member-checking, where participants were able to provide feedback or clarify their statements. Lincoln and Guba (1985) state that member-checking ensures that the participants' perspectives accurately guide the researcher's interpretations. To gain a deep understanding of each participant's experiences in this multiple perspective case study, interview transcripts from each case were coded and analyzed one at a time (Stake, 2013).

All interview transcripts were formatted and imported to qualitative data software, NVivo 12. At this point, I had reviewed the interview transcripts five times in order to gain familiarity and understanding of the prominent concepts and themes (Thomas, 2006). During the first cycle of coding in NVivo 12, interviews were analyzed line by line and In Vivo codes were utilized. Important words and phrases were highlighted to identify patterns and themes. In Vivo codes were then copied to an MS text editing page. At this point, hundreds of text units were highlighted for analysis. A sample of the In Vivo codes gathered from the first interview transcripts are included in Table 4. I wrote an analytic memo where I reflected on my code

choices and the emergent patterns. Then, I read through the interview transcripts a second time in NVivo to condense the number of In Vivo codes.

Table 4

Example of First Cycle In Vivo Codes

Interview 1	
P1	"Sad at first" "New place" "But now I'm happy" "Nervous at first" "School is big" "My friends help me" "School is fun" "Recess is fun" "I like everything about school"
P2	"Less homework" "A little scared' "Old friends can speak the same language as me" "Here, I'm scared" "Shy at first" "Scared at first" "New friends are like my old friends" "My teacher is the best thing about school" "There's nothing I don't like about school" "English is challenging" "Math is easy here"
P3	"People are nice and kind" "I miss my family" "I think nobody will play with me" "I have many friends now" "Some are very nice and kind" "It's just like my old school" "I can find kids like my old classmates in my new class" "It's funny to compare the people here and there" "I have many friends from other countries" "I really admire my teacher" "She is my role model"
P4	"Canada is nice" "I missed my old school" "They're friendly to me" "I felt proud" "It's okay to ask for help" "Playing makes me feel better"
P5	"I miss the Korean house" "What's going to happen?" "People were different, new" "I wasn't sure how to communicate"

"I'm not nervous and it's always fun"

Code landscaping was used at this point to allow me to take a visual look at potential categories. Code landscaping is an exploratory heuristic tool that uses textual and visual methods to provide a "visual look of your text's most salient words and thus potential codes and categories" (Saldaña, 2016, p. 223). The list of In Vivo codes was inputted into Wordle, a software that generates world clouds. Based on the frequency of words appearing in participants' responses, the word will appear larger in the visual cloud visual. This was a useful strategy for transitioning into thematic coding because I was able to get a sense of the prominent words, phrases, and themes.

Figure 1

Wordle Used in Code Landscaping

At this point, I reviewed the In Vivo codes and condensed them to organize and simplify the data (Braun & Clarke, 2019). During this phase, I also began to identify emerging categories. Once the In Vivo codes were condensed, I began to cut and paste the In Vivo codes into a MS Word chart based on three categories that specifically addressed the research questions. These three categories included: challenges, supports, and feelings towards school. However, I felt that some codes did not seem to fit into any of the three categories. During the next phase of coding, I

reviewed the codes again and re-examined the categories. The new categories were uncertainty, acculturation, school environment, thriving, individual resilience factors, relationships, language barriers, and school structures. As codes were assigned to categories, I looked for patterns and tensions across each case which helped to establish broader themes. The previous categories were reorganized once again, and the codes were clarified into fifteen categories and organized into five themes (see Table 5). Codes were organized into categories based on how the shared context they were referring to. Themes were determined based on how the categories related to each other.

Table 5

Emergent Themes, Categories, and Codes

Theme	Category	Code
Relocation	Fear of the unknown	Anxiety "A little scared" New place "Everything is new" "Here, I'm scared" "What's going to happen?" "Are they going to be my friend?" Unfamiliarity Interrupted schooling "I cried"
	Cultural dissonance	"Old friends can speak the same language as me" Female teachers "It's funny to compare the people here and there" "I can find kids like my old classmates in my new class" Different school structure "People were different, new" Different rules Less expectations
	Connection to home	"I miss my family" "I missed my old school" Fond memories "I miss the Korean house" Familiar places

		"My family and friends are all in China" Hoping to reunite with old friends
Positive Relationships	Sense of belonging	"New friends are like my old friends" Social connection "I have many friends now" Classmates are kind Attachment to friends Friends as translators "Friends make me happy" "Friends share the day with you" "Very happy to have new friends here" "Making friends is a happy thing" Perceived peer support Belonging Perceived peer acceptance
	Connection to teacher	"I really admire my teacher" Teacher as role model "My teacher helps me" Praise from teacher Desire to please teacher "I'm grateful for my teacher" Trust in teacher/supervisors "I love my kind teacher" "If you do a good job, teachers like you"
	Family support	Happy family Family is important "Family helps me get through difficult times" Moving was a bonding experience
School environment	Inclusivity	Welcoming atmosphere Diversity "I have many friends from other countries" "They were friendly to me" School fosters socialization Understanding teacher "People are nice and kind" Classmates are willing to help "My friends introduced new friends to me" "Even though I am a foreigner, I don't get discriminated against" "Making friends was easy" Made friends quickly
	Safe place	"Very free in my class" Less rules Safe environment "It's okay to ask for help" School feels "very warm"

		"I feel at home" in my classroom "I like everything about school" "I'm not nervous and it's always fun" School is fun
	New opportunities	School clubs Buddy program Jobs and duties New subjects/curriculum More time for play Less academic pressures
Language	Language barriers	"English is challenging" Insecure about English fluency "I wasn't sure how to communicate" English is biggest challenge Anxiety upon relocation Difficult to understand tasks/assignments Reliance upon peers with shared language "I don't know how to ask for help" Limits social opportunities
	Language learning	ELL class is valuable Learning French in addition to English Peer translators English support from teacher
	English as advantageous	English fluency eases transition Motivated to improve English "I wish I was better at English"
Overcoming challenges	Social strategies	"I can find kids like my old classmates in my new class" Play and cooperation Social imitation Prosocial behaviour Peer observation Asking for help Participation in extra-curriculars "School helps social life" Helping others Identity negotiation
	Positive outlook	Gratitude Optimism Goals & aspirations Self-care Working hard leads to new opportunities Motivation Excited about future Coping with stress

Thriving	Pride Perceived competence "But now it's easy" Cultural pride Accomplishments "But now I'm happy" "Not nervous anymore" Coming to Canada was a good thing Positive self-image "Now I want to stay in Canada"

Ethics

Ethical considerations were an especially critical component of this research study as immigrant children are potentially vulnerable participants. As such, protecting the well-being of participants was a main priority. Ethical clearance for this study was obtained from the General Research Ethics Board at Queen's University and the Tri-Council policy. A combined Letter of Information and Consent Form (LOI/CF) was provided to the participants and their parents or guardians. Prior to beginning each interview, the combined Letter of Information and Consent Form was read aloud in its entirety as well. Consent was obtained directly from the participant or guardian, as well as the child participant through the use of a Child Assent form. The combined LOI/CF outlined the potential risks involved in the study which included the potential for participants to become upset when discussing bad or emotional memories. As such, participants and their parents or guardians were made aware of their right to stop the interview at any time, for any reason, without penalty. Further, participants and their guardians were provided with a list of local and free child mental health and crisis counselling resources in the event that their child needed of additional support after participating. Child participants were reminded before each interview of their right to stop the interview or skip questions. Additionally, participants were made aware of the rigorous efforts that were made to ensure confidentiality and anonymity.

These included, using pseudonyms, removing any personally identifying information from interview transcripts/drawings, and storing all study data on a password protected file.

During interviews, participants were actively observed for any signs of emotional distress and the flexible interview protocol allowed me to be able to change the subject if participants appeared to be uncomfortable. To address the risk for a potential power imbalance between participants and myself as the researcher, I made efforts to ensure that the participants felt safe by asking open-ended questions, using child-friendly language, and being sensitive to linguistic/cultural differences. Due to an oversight during the process of obtaining ethics approval, the participants' drawings were not included in the findings because the participants were not asked for their permission in having them included along with their words and quotes.

Chapter 4

Findings

Five newcomer children aged 6-12 were interviewed about their experiences migrating and adjusting to life in Canada. This research aimed to illuminate the remarkable ways immigrant children demonstrate resilience, not only to overcome challenge, but to thrive in the face of it. The participants in this study shared their experiences by first completing a drawing and then speaking to parts of the drawing through the 30-minute semi-structured interviews. Through hearing their stories of challenge and triumph, five major themes emerged from the interviews. Those themes speak to the nature of their experience (research question one) and help to identify the challenges they encountered, as well as the sources of support they found (research question two). The five themes are: (1) *Relocation*, (2) *Positive Relationships*, (3) *School Environment*, (4) *Language*, and (5) *Overcoming Challenges*. In this chapter, each of these themes is represented and described in sections. The guiding research questions sought to gain a deeper understanding of newcomer students' experiences adjusting to school in Canada, as told by themselves and in their own words. One of the main aims of this study was to honour the voices of newcomer children, giving them an opportunity to share their (counter)stories. As such, direct quotations were intentionally and extensively incorporated throughout this chapter to put forth their lived experiences and personal perspectives. Through the findings in this chapter, we witness these children's incredible strength, optimism, and resilience.

Relocation

The participants each shared stories about their migration journeys, how they felt upon arrival in Canada, and what it was like to go to a new school in a new country. This theme

includes three categories: (1) *Fear of the Unknown*, (2) *Cultural Dissonance*, and (3) *Connection to Home*.

Fear of the Unknown

Experiencing migration and relocation can be a major stressor for newcomer children, for a multitude of reasons. Newcomer children can experience increased stress and anxiety due to the challenges they face in adapting to life in a new place where the language and culture is different than what they know (Berry et al., 2006). Four of the five participants had arrived in Canada within the last six months as the time of participation, whereas Soroush arrived in Canada from Iran a little over three years ago. As such, Soroush was unable to recall many details about what the trip was like and what he experienced. The other four participants were able to recall many specific details from their trip, including the routes they travelled, the time it took, the time of day it was, the food they ate, and the movies they watched on the plane ride. No matter how long the participants have been living in Canada, each participant still described their journey to Canada as a memorable and significant moment in their lives for varying reasons. Soroush, Zafir, and Catherine perceived coming to Canada as a good thing because they were excited about the opportunity to travel and see a new place. Zafir's family had moved from place to place a few times before moving to Canada from India due to the nature of his father's work. Soroush stated that coming to Canada was "really good" as he had not had the opportunity to travel in a while, and Catherine stated, "I felt excitement and I felt like I'm actually going to a foreign country." She was excited about the prospect of experiencing life in a new place and said "I was really excited thinking, what's going to happen? Because I was expecting it to be different than Korea." Catherine, who emigrated from South Korea, alluded to her knowledge of Canadian culture by stating that she was very excited to go to McDonalds and that it was the first thing her

family did when they arrived in Canada. She was disappointed though when she tried her first hamburger as "it was not what I was expecting." However, Steven and Rachel displayed a contrasting response. Steven and Rachel, who both emigrated from China, stated that they felt scared and afraid about coming to Canada. Rachel, aged 13, described feeling a fear of the unknown by stating that they felt worried because "I have a new life. Everything is new." Other participants also alluded to experiencing a fear of the unfamiliar by sharing they felt that they did not know what to expect. Soroush anticipated, and worried about, potential challenges he would face connecting to his new classmates. He shared that at first, he was "nervous because I was like, are they going to be friends with me or not?"

While participants shared contrasting feelings about coming to Canada, all five participants described experiencing feelings of fear and anxiety upon going to school in Canada for the first time. Soroush's migration experience differed from the other four participants because he had experienced an interruption in his schooling. His family arrived in Canada from Iran as visitors and thus, were unable to enroll him in public school. Soroush spent a year taking English classes with a few other immigrant children at a local college, so while Soroush shared that he felt nervous to go to his new school for the first time, he was also looking forward to attending school again. He stated that "I was a bit nervous. But then I was happy because I haven't been to school for a really long time." Steven shared that he felt shy and afraid on his first day of school while Zafir shared that he felt sad on his first day because he missed his old school in India. Zafir, aged seven, also shared that it was scary having to make new friends at first. Rachel and Catherine, both aged 13, shared similar experiences in that they both felt worried about being able to make new friends. On her first day, Rachel said "I cried. I think nobody will play with me." Catherine shared that she had the opportunity to visit the school

beforehand with her family, which was a positive experience. Attending school on her own, however, was a different experience. Catherine described the initial language barriers she encountered and said that "I was scared because the people were different, new. And the language wasn't the language that I was used to, so I wasn't sure how to communicate."

Cultural Dissonance

All participants expressed the desire to make friends and form social bonds with their classmates as a way to ease their transition and overcome this challenge. However, participants expressed certain tensions they experienced in trying to form connections with their new classmates, and some participants described having an easier time than others. Cultural dissonance is experienced when the cultural norms, values, and practices of an individual's home culture are in contention with that of the new culture individuals are adapting to (Berry, 2007). In this case, some participants experienced cultural dissonance through language barriers, acculturation stress, and by acknowledging differences between Canadian children and what children were like in their home country. Steven, Catherine, and Soroush shared that in their experience, making friends was easy. Rachel revealed that she had a difficult time making friends at first because she felt shy. Rachel, Steven, and Catherine all expressed that they observed their classmates' behaviour while navigating the new social dynamics and cultural norms. Steven, Rachel, and Catherine each revealed that they were able to find friends that reminded them of the friends they had at their old schools in their old countries. Steven stated that "my friends are like the friends I had back in China" and Rachel said that "In China, the girls are similar. Some girls are exactly the same and have the same personality as my friends in China as well." When asked about the differences between her classmates in Canada and her classmates in Korea, Catherine shared that there were no major differences and that they acted

the same. Both Rachel and Steven shared that they continue to talk with their old friends in China over the phone. Cultural displacement or dissonance is a common experience for immigrants in which they feel torn between two places, as if you are stuck somewhere in the middle, which can be an isolating experience (Berry, 2006). Participants did not seem to discuss their cultural identities and how these identities were changed or transformed after relocating to Canada, which may suggest the presence of societal assimilative pressures. Steven made one fleeting remark alluding to his culture when discussing what he would say to give advice to another newcomer child in which he said that he would tell them that there is a T&T grocery store, a grocery store that sells Asian food products, seemingly trying to offer a piece of reassurance or comfort.

Connection to Home

Relocation caused stress for several participants because they experienced separation from their homes and family members. This loss of connection led participants to experience emotional distress and anxiety about anticipated isolation. All five participants recalled memories and spoke fondly of their previous homes and what their daily lives and routines entailed. Each of the participants painted a vivid and bright image of their previous homes through the descriptions they offered, conveying feelings of nostalgia and attachment. For instance, Rachel said that her previous home "was big and there's many rooms in it. I had many toys. My bears, my drawings, and many different paints." Catherine said that her previous home "felt comfortable. I had a lot of white furniture, so it was really pretty. Korean houses are like high-rise apartments and there are playgrounds and markets in one apartment. So, I miss the Korean house." Soroush shared that his previous home "had a big balcony and you'd see a park in the distance." Zafir shared that there were many flowers and bushes at his old home in India,

and that there were many other children to play with in his neighbourhood. He stated that he loved playing with his friends and going to the beach. Participants shared that they missed their homes, neighbourhoods, family members, friends, and school. Rachel stated that "my family and my friends are all in China." Steven displayed that these feelings still lingered by expressing hopes to reunite with his old friends one day and that they would come to visit him in Canada. He stated, "I want, in the future someday, to have a big house and all my friends in China will come and have dinner together and play together."

Positive Relationships

The support of positive relationships was a major, recurring theme throughout the interviews with each participant. Participants emphasized that making friends, having an understanding teacher, and feeling support from family were sources of support that helped them adjust. As such, the theme of *Positive Relationships* contains the following categories: (1) *Sense of Belonging*, (2) *Connection to Teacher*, and (3) *Family Support*.

Sense of Belonging

Considering the immense stress and pressures of adjusting to a new way of life after migration, all participants expressed the significant impact that supportive relationships had in easing the adversity they faced. Each of the five participants talked at length about how friends helped to make school a welcoming and happy place in which they felt that they belonged. Soroush stated that his nervous feelings all went away as soon as he was able to make a new friend, which he believes took about one week. He stated that "I was nervous at first, but then I got friends." Zafir stated that he likes living in Canada because of the friends he has made at his new school. Making friends was perceived to be a very momentous occasion, like a wish that had come true, in which some participants could recall the exact moment they formed a friendship.

For example, Steven explained “when I came to school, I walked in the class and there was two boys and they asked me, ‘friends?’ and I said ‘yes,’ and they said, ‘yeah!’ and I was happy.” Rachel expressed determination and perseverance in making friends as she said “meeting new people is a little bit difficult because I’m a little shy, but making new friends is a happy thing. Because it’s a very happy thing!”

All five participants shared that spending time with friends was the best part of their school day. Rachel described a sense of comfort she found in her friendships by stating “I was very happy to have a new friend here and someone to talk with you and share the day with you.” Zafir described similar feelings of comfort through friendship in that he shared he feels happy when he gets to school because “I like playing with my friends. It makes me feel good.” Rachel shared that on days when she wakes up tired and does not want to go to school, she thinks about seeing her friends and becomes excited. In fact, she went on to say that often she feels like she wishes the school day was longer so that she could have more time with her friends. Catherine had a similar response regarding how she feels at the end of a typical school day when it is time to go home, as she said “I feel sorry to leave my friends.” When asked how he feels when he is about to go to school now, Steven shared that he now feels excited because “I can play with my friends.” This response was a stark contrast to how he described his feelings on the first day of school, before he had formed friendships. Over the course of the three interviews, Steven exhibited an increasingly strong sense of connection to friends. For instance, in our first interview, Steven said that his nice teacher was the best part about school. However, by the third interview, which occurred several weeks after the first interview, Steven stated that “playing with my friends is the thing I love about school.” Rachel and Catherine both explicitly stated that school is important because it was an opportunity to make friends and socialize. Rachel stated

that she believes school is important because “we can learn many things and can make new friends and have a great day.” When Catherine was asked whether or not she thinks school is important, she said “I think school is important because it helps your social life.” Therefore, it was clear that making friends and building social bonds was the top priority for all the participants.

The participants described that their friends are kind and welcoming people who were always willing to help. All participants stated that they had a friend who they knew they could ask for help when they needed it. When asked what makes her feel happy about school, Rachel listed her friends because they are “very kind, very nice, and they help me.” Rachel also shared that she felt she had some good friends that knew a lot about her. In our last interview, she said that when she is going through a difficult time emotionally, she will go and talk to her friends about it, and they will help her to feel better. Some participants expressed perceived peer acceptance in the ease in which they shared the reasons why they are liked by classmates, and the special qualities they possess that their friends like about them. Catherine stated that “people seem to like my athleticism, active personality, and positive mind.” Compared to when she first began school in Surrey, Rachel said “I have many friends now.” She also went on to say that “what they like about me is I’m a happy person and I like to talk. I have many things to say.” Steven stated that he knows his friends like to play with him, even though he doesn’t know why. Participants expressed that they felt their friends knew a lot about them. Zafir shared that his friends know that he is a very good soccer player. Soroush stated that his friends know how good he is at coding and that they like to play video games with him. Rachel shared that her close friends know many things about her and her life including her family and that she is from China. Catherine described that she felt understood by her classmates “because I need a lot of help.

Everybody in my class knows I need English translation. So, my class understands." In this instance, it appeared that Catherine felt her class was empathetic towards her and is accepting of her needs.

Connection to Teacher

Each of the five participants described having a strong connection to their teacher. Participants expressed that their teachers are kind and someone that they can count on for help. Every participant reported that they go to the teacher when they are having difficulty. Like the role of friends, this was a recurring theme throughout each of the interviews as participants continued to emphasize appreciation for their teachers. Both Soroush and Zafir described their teacher as being very nice and someone that they could trust to help them when they needed it. Without hesitation, Soroush stated that his teacher will always help him work through something that he is confused about or feels stuck on. Soroush also stated that if he is having a conflict at school, he would tell his teacher. When asked how his teacher is kind, Zafir recounted a time when he had fallen on the playground and was bleeding, and that his teacher was quick to help him and treat his injury. Steven stated that his favourite thing about school was how nice his teacher is. Rachel displayed strong feelings of admiration for her teacher. When describing her teacher to me, she went into great detail about her personality, interests, hobbies, and life experiences. For example,

> She's not very tall but she is a very confident person, and she has two volleyball teams. She's very good at P.E. and she coaches our school's volleyball team. I really admire my teacher and she is my role model. She has traveled to many places, and in my class there's many photos on the wall from many different places. There's the sea and there's the ocean, many places.

Rachel told me about how nice her teacher was on numerous occasions throughout the interviews. In a subsequent interview, Rachel recounted a time when her teacher gave her a lot of praise in front of the whole class because of how well she did on a math test. Rachel said she often feels proud after doing well on math tests and, Rachel shared "I was so proud because one time my teacher said, 'Oh, she is learning English and she got the highest mark in our class!' That moment, I was so proud of myself." It was clear that Rachel was eager to please her teacher, and valued how her teacher perceived her. For example, when asked if she felt it was important to do a good job at school, Rachel said "I think yes because if you do a good job and teachers like you, then for some important things, they will choose you and you will get more opportunities." Zafir had a similar response, in which he said he believed it was important to do a good job at school "because the teacher says." Steven demonstrated feelings of respect for teachers as when he was asked to share what advice he could give to teachers looking to better welcome newcomers he was very surprised that he could give advice to teachers. He eventually responded with no suggestions and added that "the teachers here are great." Catherine expressed a closeness to her teacher in that she felt her teacher really understood her and her needs. For instance, Catherine said that her teacher understands that she's an immigrant student but still encourages her a lot, and that "even if I don't do as much as my classmates, my teacher is really encouraging and caring and leads me to step forward." Catherine stated that she believed her teacher was very kind and that she is a great teacher. She also went on to describe in the following interview that she really values one-on-one time with her teacher because she is so kind and helpful. In our last interview, Catherine said "I call my teacher if I need help. And then I feel grateful to my teacher, and I feel relieved." In an earlier interview, Steven stated that he felt a little shy to ask for help from his teacher. However, in a later interview, Steven shared that

asking the teacher for help made him feel better when he was facing difficulty at school. This led me to wonder if he had developed more trust in and comfort with his teacher as time went on. Many participants said that they believed their teacher knew a lot about them.

Family Support

Each participant expressed the importance of family. Participants shared that family was a reliable source of support and comfort for them. All participants described their families in a very positive light and told me about activities that their family likes to do together. In describing her family, Catherine said "my father is always on my side and worked as a firefighter in Korea. My mother is kind, and we do everything together. She is studying at college. My little brother is naughty and goes to school with me." Catherine also shared that her family enjoys going for walks and bike rides together. She said that there was a public park in her new neighborhood that her family likes to go to which reminds her of one they would frequent together in Korea. Zafir shared that his family includes his mother, father, and brother. He also went on to say that he loves to play tag with his brother. When asked who the important people in his life are, Soroush stated "my mom, my dad, and pretty much the rest of my family." It appeared that Soroush was instilled with a strong sense of family values as he also went on to say that they were important because "they're my family." Steven told me that his family likes to play games together, including Uno. When asked about what he likes about his life, Steven said "I have a happy family with my mom and dad and sister." He also went on to say that his family are the most important people in his life because he feels happy and safe with his family. When describing her family, Rachel shared...

I have father, mother, and brother. I like to play with my brother. He's very fun. We also

> play with snow and play different things. I like to cook with my brother. I help my mother and go shopping with her. My father, I like to do homework with him because if there's something I don't know, I ask him.

In our last interview, Catherine also said that talking to her family helps her when she is struggling. Rachel also shared that talking to her family helps her feel better when she is going through a difficult time. She also went on to state that she considers her family to be the most important people in her life, and expressed gratitude that despite how challenging it was to move to the other side of the world, her family is together.

School Environment

The school environment was discussed at length by all of the participants, as this was a critical component in sharing their school experiences. This theme includes three categories: (1) *Inclusivity,* (2) *Safe Place,* and (3) *New Opportunities*.

Inclusivity

Participants frequently described their schools as being inclusive and welcoming. When asked if her classmates did a good job of making her feel welcome, she said "I think they welcomed me because when I go to school or leave school, my friends welcome me, and I am grateful." Catherine also shared that "the first time I go to school, my teacher said, 'welcome to Canada' and this made me feel welcome." Soroush shared that his teacher made him feel welcome by inviting him to introduce himself to his class on the first day. Soroush was quick to report that he believed his teacher "definitely" did a good job of making him feel welcome, while he was more hesitant to say the same about his classmates. He went on to say that this teacher showed him around the school so that he knew where everything was. Steven stated that his classmates made him feel welcome by playing with him. Rachel said that she felt welcomed in

her class because her classmates were not talking negatively about her, were understanding when she asked them questions, and took an interest in learning more about her. She said that her classmates always helped and taught her new things. Rachel explained "when I come to school the first day, they came to say 'hello' and 'do you need help? Do you understand this? Do you want this?' or 'where did you come from?' Just asking questions and helped me." In our last interview, Rachel shared that her first friends helped her expand her social network by introducing her to more people. Rachel also said that she felt her teacher did a good job of making her feel welcomed by being kind and by giving her reassurance and praise. Zafir stated that the children in his class are "friendly" towards him. Zafir expressed that he felt welcomed by his teacher and classmates, and when asked what his class did to make him feel welcome, he said "they were happy to me."

In one interview, Catherine acknowledged how race might affect their acculturation. In her drawing depicting the things she likes the most about school, Catherine wrote "Korea" in big bubble letters and explained that "I love that Canadian people love Korea. Even if I am an Asian foreigner, I don't get discriminated against and we all get along equally." As such, Catherine expressed awareness that her race set her apart from her peers and was a factor that contributed to her experience. When asked what his class and teacher know about him, Steven revealed that his classmates knew he was from China and that he can speak Mongolian and Chinese. Steven was happy to share these components of his cultural identity, leading me to think that his classroom environment allows students to share their cultural backgrounds without fear of judgment or discrimination. Each participant described their class as having a lot of diversity among the students, to varying degrees. When asked if there were other students who had moved to Canada from different places in her class, Rachel stated "yeah, there's many. I have many

friends from other countries." Steven stated that there are many children in his class from other countries and that his friends have moved to Canada from Vietnam, China, and India. For Catherine, this was to a lesser degree as her family settled in a small suburb with overall less diversity, compared to the other four students living in large municipalities in Metro Vancouver. For these students, they met many classmates from many different countries. In giving advice to other newcomer children, Rachel said "it's very easy, I think. You can fit into the class and people don't say 'Oh, you don't know English' or talk about you. They don't say. They will help you and teach you something you don't know."

Steven described a special moment in which he was able to present a piece of his work to his whole school. At our second interview he said, "two days ago, the school put on some events for the Remembrance Day. I was the one kid who read the letter I wrote to the 'Unknown Solider.' In front of the whole school, the teachers, and parents." Steven shared this moment with pride and this opportunity allowed him to feel as if he was a valued member of the school community, while receiving praise and positive reinforcement for his efforts. Rachel stated that she did not like participating in sports very much, but her teacher does and has the class do physical activity each day. Despite Rachel's initial uneasiness with this, she said "I don't like sports very much but when I am in my classroom, I feel that sports are very fun because I am with my classmates and they talk with you, play with you. That's very fun." Therefore, it appears that Rachel's teacher has established a classroom community that fosters inclusivity in which students can feel safe to push themselves out of their comfort zones and have positive experiences doing things they are uncomfortable doing. Rachel recalled a time in class when they were able to make dumplings. In another instance, there was a cake making competition in class, in which she shared that her group had won, and so they were given chips as a prize. It

sounded like activities like these fostered inclusion in Rachel's case as she was able to participate in meaningful opportunities for peer bonding and socialization, regardless of her background and linguistic challenges. It is also worth noting that Rachel stated her class made dumplings together, which is significant because dumplings are not considered a traditional part of Western cuisine. So, this class activity may have been intentionally chosen as an activity to promote multiculturalism where students were given the chance to share their own cultural traditions and foods. Zafir described a similar experience in which he discussed how his class was making "Chinese kites." The Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario (2019) states that cultural appreciation moves beyond a surface level understanding of cultures and promotes respectful dialogue and learning based on lived experience, while also avoiding cultural appropriation, marginalization, and the perpetuation of stereotypes.

Safe Place

Every participant described school as being fun. Steven described play as being an integral component of his school life as when asked what he does in a typical day he said, "we write, we draw, and we play." Besides the language barrier, Steven stated that nothing else was challenging about school. Catherine also shared that she believes that relationships are a more important aspect of school than academic performance is. This may suggest that her school leaning environment fosters positive student well-being if she does not perceive any pressures from her school or teacher to get good grades. These participants also explicitly stated that there are not as many rules at their new school as there were back at their old schools in Korea and China. When asked about the rules at her school, Catherine replied "No small talking and no watching your phone. That's it." Rachel explained the rules at her new school and said "no wearing hats in class. And there's not many other rules in my class. I think it's very free in my

class because in my China school, there's many rules. You can't drink water in class, you can't wear hats, you can't talk to each other in class. And here, we can talk in the class. There are not many rules."

Participants also exhibited that they felt comfortable when asking for help. Without hesitation, each participant stated that they know there are people to help them when they are at school. When asked if people were willing to help her at school, Rachel said...

> Yes, they're very kind and helpful. When there's something I don't know or don't understand, they will tell me. And if I don't know what I should do, they will teach me and tell me and help me in many ways. I don't know, I can't do, I don't understand, they will help me.

Soroush shared that he felt no strong positive or negative feelings when having to ask for help from his teacher or friends. While Rachel admitted that she felt shy at first to ask for help, in our last interview she said "after more time I think it's a normal thing. So, I don't feel afraid anymore." Zafir was able to list off several adults he trusted to help him at school including his friends, teacher, recess supervisors, and educational assistants. He also stated that "it's okay to ask for help."

In the first interview, participants were asked to draw pictures of their classrooms and schools. Each participant enthusiastically depicted their schools and classrooms as a happy place. When asked to describe their drawings, students explained every aspect of their drawings and I came to realize the significant amount of detail each student included. Students included aspects of their daily routines and classroom rules in their drawings, explaining what their life is like at school with great pride. Zafir was eager to show me his picture and describe his classroom to me. He shared that his classroom is filled with books they can read. In his second drawing, Zafir

wrote “when I go to school, I feel happy.” Soroush was able to explain all areas of this school and playground to me, and listed where every grade’s classrooms were located around the school. When drawing a picture of his school, Steven said “I’m happy when I’m drawing my school.” Like Soroush, Steven was very eager to tell me about his picture and point out all of the details he included, painting a vivid picture of his school as a bright, happy, and fun place to be. When discussing Rachel’s drawing of her classroom, I asked her to share how she felt when she was drawing her picture, and how she felt when she looked at it. She said, “I like it very much and feel very warm.” She went on to say “sometimes I feel at home. I like my classroom. It’s very beautiful. We have many pictures and drawings on the wall.”

New Opportunities

Every participant was enthusiastic in sharing the things they like about their lives now that they live in Canada. For Soroush, attending school again was something he greatly looked forward to after not attending school for one year. When asked why he felt excitement, he replied “new place and going to school again.” Catherine stated that “the school size is small, but it’s very kind. And I think it’s safe. I’m not nervous and it’s always fun. My classmates are kind and help me when I have a hard time.” For Steven, Rachel, and Catherine, school feels freer. Steven, Rachel, and Catherine stated on numerous occasions that the academics are not as rigorous, they do not have as much homework, and there is more time allotted to engaging with classmates through play and fun activities. For example, Rachel stated that “I like Math class the best. And then when I do math tests, I think I’m so smart because it’s so easy.” Steven said that he likes school in Canada because there is less homework and that “most of the time we play outside so we will have more fresh air which is just really good.” Regarding Math, Steven explained that “in China, in grade three we learn multiplication. And here in grade three, we’ll learn comparing.

Which one is big, and which one is small." Catherine stated that "there is less work, less homework, and it's more playful and active. There's a lot of time to just go out and play. Because here, recess time is just go out and play. But in Korea, most of the time children just stay inside." She also went on to list the many fun things she does at school including physical education, badminton, volleyball, games, Art, and Music. While Zafir did not discuss how school was similar or different to his experiences in India, he shared that his favourite thing to do at his new school was centers. In Canadian primary education, centers are a commonly used activity where students have the opportunity to choose the activity they engage with. Often, centers give students a chance to play freely at the end of the day.

Rachel also stated that there is less homework, and the expectations and workload are easier. She mentioned that in Canada, she has many new subjects that she did not have in China. For instance, "I like the subjects we learn because we have some, like health education, I didn't have before. And French. I think French is very interesting." Rachel also expressed her enthusiasm about the art projects who class was working on. She said "I like drawing in art class. You get to make something and next week we're making ugly dolls. I'm thinking about how I can draw that. We made a shoebox living room. I made a bed and desk." She also expressed that there are more opportunities for engaging learning activities. In our last interview, Rachel started by saying that school was going well and that she was still really enjoying it. She stated "school is very nice. We have many interesting things to do, and the class is very interesting. We have many different projects. We have novel study this week." It was evident that Rachel's teacher had their class participate in a wide range of activities that Rachel found very exciting and engaging, and that this was different from what she had experienced at school in China. For instance, she shared that "We have many projects I like at school. In China, in six whole years

we had less than 10 projects. And now we have many of them. Line dance and making cake. Field trips. Shoebox project." She mentioned that her class did a lot of physical activity week to week, and that this was different from what she experienced at her school in China. Her class does yoga, goes on long distance runs, and competes in a regular beep test challenge. Rachel said "my teacher likes sports very much. So, we run 2km on Monday and 3.5km on Thursday, and we have beep test. We have P.E. every day. We play basketball and dodgeball. And we're going to skate on ice next week or next month."

Rachel, Steven, and Catherine all mentioned that their new schools were substantially smaller than the schools they attended in their home countries, China and Korea. Rachel stated, "There was 1000, nearly 2000 kids in the school in China. But here it's like under 500" and that there are "20 students in my class but in China there was 55." Being in a class with less students may contribute to their feelings of connection among peers and their teacher. Rachel also stated that it was different to have one teacher teaching all of the subject areas. She explained that in China, there is usually a different teacher for each subject but in Canada, her teacher teaches their class everything except French and Art. Steven observed that in Canada, the teachers are mostly female. Catherine added that in Korea, they do not have split grade classes.

Some participants also mentioned extra-curriculars and school job opportunities their school offers that they enjoyed. For instance, Catherine stated "I like the club activities in this school. There are many arts and sports activities that I like. There are not many arts and sports activities in Korea because they study a lot." Rachel took on a school job as a lunch monitor for younger students. She also shared that she was enjoying the opportunity to participate in a Buddy program with a younger class. She explained that the older students were paired with younger students and encouraged to plan fun activities to do together.

In general, all participants exhibited very strong positive feelings towards their new schools. When asked about what they do not like about their school, they often had nothing to report. Catherine said that the only thing she did not like about her school was that it was a much smaller building than the school she attended in Korea. She also stated that there were less washrooms and water fountains but other than that, "I don't think there's anything else I don't like." Zafir said that he wishes school would start a little later in the morning so he had more time to sleep in, but that there wouldn't be anything else he would change other than that. Catherine stated that at the end of a typical school day she wishes she could stay longer because she is really enjoying school and "finding school life interesting." Soroush stated that he wouldn't change anything about his school, except for making recess longer. Similarly, Steven also shared that there is nothing he would change about his school, "but, I want to make the entire school into candy. Candyland." When asked what Steven wants to be when he grows up, he stated he wants to be a teacher "so that I will remember what it was like going to school." This speaks to how much he is enjoying the time he spends at school. Rachel also stated that she likes everything about school, but added "actually, I don't like the photo day because we have to take photos. I hate to take photos." When asked to draw a picture of what she enjoys most about school, Rachel drew a picture of her view of the whiteboard from her desk as, "when I go to school, I always look at the Shape of the Day every time because this is my favourite thing to do." The Shape of the Day is the class's plan and schedule for the day. The fact that this is one of Rachel's favourite things about school shows her enthusiasm and enjoyment of school. When asked about what he dislikes about his school, Zafir replied "I like everything." He went on to explain that he finds his new school to be very fun and exciting. In fact, when I asked how Zafir felt at the end of a typical school day when it is time to go home, he said "I feel sad because I

want to stay in school." Catherine shared that she feels happy and excited when she wakes up in the morning and it is time to go to school. Catherine went on to say that when it is time to go home at the end of the day "I wish I could stay more because I'm really enjoying the time at school. I am finding school life interesting."

Language

The participants in study spoke a multitude of languages including Mandarin, Telugu, Mongolian, Korean, and Farsi. Both Rachel and Steven spoke Mandarin and Mongolian, while Catherine spoke Korean, Zafir spoke Telugu, and Soroush spoke Farsi. They also arrived in Canada with little to no English fluency, which impacted their acculturative experiences in Canada and at school to varying degrees. This theme includes three categories: (1) *Language Barriers*, (2) *Language Learning*, and (3) *English as Advantageous*.

Language Barriers

For three of the five participants, language barriers were perceived to be a major challenge in adjusting to school and forming relationships, as these students began school in Canada with limited prior experience speaking English. For Steven, Rachel and Catherine, language barriers were a major source of stress and anxiety. Steven expressed that he anticipated having difficulties socially by saying he was scared to come to Canada because "in China there's my friends. They can talk the same language, Mongolian and Chinese. But here, I'm a little bit scared." For Rachel, she stated that she was also scared to go to school in Canada because, "I think because my English is not good, I won't understand classes." When asked what the hardest part about school was after having attended school for a few months, Rachel stated that "it's language because some English, the hard words, I can't understand." She recalled that "the first day of school is very difficult because you don't have friends and don't understand the language,

and I'm not very good at grammar, spelling words, so that's difficult." Catherine agreed that English is the biggest challenge she experienced while adjusting to school. Catherine expressed that this continues to be a challenge for her as she said she is struggling with "English, like when talking to new friends."

Steven also stated that "English is still challenging. That's why I started the ELL class." As such, Steven concluded that Language class was the hardest part of school, understandably so as this requires enough English fluency to be able to understand texts and write down your thoughts while adhering to grammar and spelling conventions.

Language Learning

Participants mentioned relying on other classmates for language support. For instance, Steven stated that he has a friend and "if I don't know how to spell the words, I'll ask him, and he'll help me." Four of the five participants received direct English instruction and support at school via a pull-out model where they are removed from their general classrooms for a short period a few times each week, so they are able to work either one-on-one or in a small group with other linguistically diverse students. Rachel expressed her fondness of her ELL teacher and described her experiences in the ELL group, "it's good, I read books and learn many new words and know more about English." She said she meets with the ELL teacher every day and that her group includes herself, and two other students. She went on to describe an additional challenge as well, "oh yeah, and there's one more language, French. I have to learn French and English. Both. It's hard."

Two participants shared that they formed especially close relationships with classmates who spoke the same first language as them. For both participants, it appeared that their teacher

intentionally placed the students together in close proximity so that the participants would be able to receive language support. For instance, Rachel said...

> My friend sits on my right side, and she helps me because she can speak Chinese and she can translate. She told me if I'm late, I have to go to the office and get something. And she told me how to use the Kahoot game we play on Fridays. And she will tell me how to do the homework and if we have to do something, she'll help me, and teach some new words. She teaches me English sometimes.

Evidently, this student provided Rachel with much more than just language support and helped her to understand the classroom rules and norms as well. Considering the initial language barrier, Rachel shared that this student knows her the best "because she's my friend and she sits with me." Catherine formed a friendship with another student in her class that spoke Korean and said that her teacher often sent the two of them out to the hallway to work together. In Catherine's case as well, she formed a close bond with this student and was grateful for her support. In describing the challenges of learning English, she said "There are times when I have a hard time in class. But I don't feel lost or discouraged because my friend helps me a lot." When drawing a picture to depict something she likes about school, Catherine drew a picture of her with this friend working out in the hallway during reading time. During this time, Catherine's teacher has the classmate teach Catherine new words. Catherine said "the reason why I draw this picture is because it is one of my favourite times in my school life. When I look at the drawing, I think about how much my friend helps me at school." In both of these cases, the participants described a closeness and feelings of relief when being with these peers because they knew they could count on them to be able to answer their questions and help them through difficult tasks. When Steven began school in Canada, there were no other children in his class that could speak

Chinese. However, a student arrived from China a few months later. Steven took on the role of translator for this student and was seated next to this student by the teacher so that he could provide them with language support.

During the last interviews, participants were asked if they had advice to give teachers when welcoming children from other countries. Rachel stated it was helpful that her teacher let her sit beside another girl in the class who spoke Chinese. She also suggested that students learning English should be given more direct assistance and easier homework if they need. She also said it is important for these students to be seated near the teacher so they can easily ask for help. Catherine also noted that it is helpful to have teachers who can provide direct language support to multilingual students as she said, "I think teachers need to be kind interpreters for the students, and to take care of them with interest."

English as Advantageous

A few participants acknowledged that being able to speak English would have helped their transition to school. Catherine expressed a desire to have better English fluency as she said when she worked with her friend who helped her "I wish I can speak English better." When asked what advice she would share with other newcomers to Canada, Catherine said "I would advise them to study English steadily. The reason is that I should have been good at English to adapt quickly to school life." Soroush stated that he was able to speak English fluently when he started attending his new school, due to taking English classes primarily for several months before beginning school. He stated that he had no difficulties communicating and that being able to talk to people helped him be able to make friends. Thus, English fluency can be seen to be advantageous for immigrant children in easing the challenges they face when adjusting to school in Canada.

Overcoming Challenges

The participants expressed that they were adapting positively to their new school environments, displaying their ability to overcome the challenges they faced. This theme includes three categories: (1) *Social Strategies*, (2) *Positive Outlook*, and (3) *Thriving*.

Social Strategies

All the participants described using social strategies in order to make friends. One social strategy that most of the participants described was asking for help as a way to initiate a conversation with a classmate. For instance, when asked what helped him to make friends, Steven said, "sometimes the teacher will ask us to write something, and I don't know how to spell some words, so I'll ask them." In this example, Steven shares that asking his classmates for help was a social strategy in which he realized that doing so would provide him with an opportunity to interact with his peers. Rachel also stated that she tried to make friends by asking for help, and by offering to help other people. She said that initiating this contact helped her as "we meet and then we become good friends." Rachel went on to describe that initiating conversation by asking for help created opportunities to converse with her classmates and learn more about them. Zafir explained that he was able to make friends by playing with them. Considering Zafir is currently in grade 1, it can be expected that there are many opportunities for the children to engage with each other through play. During play, cooperation, sharing, compromise, and problem-solving are important skills that allow children to get along with others (Parker, Thomsen, & Berry, 2022). As discussed earlier, all the participants displayed an openness and eagerness towards making friends at their new schools. As such, it was evident that the children had an outgoing social disposition. Zafir also expressed his social disposition by saying that if someone else was joining his class from another country, he would say "I like to

draw and what do you like to do?" Even if they felt shy or nervous about interacting with new children, they persevered. Rachel displayed her own personal determination and perseverance even when uncomfortable or unsure as she said "just don't be shy and make some new friends. They will help you. Go ask questions." Soroush recognized that pushing himself to initiate conversations with his classmates despite feeling uncomfortable was an important tactic in forming friendships. Catherine also expressed her natural friendly and sociable disposition by saying "I like to meet and make new friends. I have no difficulties." She went on to recognize that it is "better for friends to come up and talk to me first." Catherine also shared that having a friend to translate helps her communicate with other people in her friend group. This was similar to Rachel's experience as she formed a close bond with another student who also spoke Chinese that often acted as a translator, as discussed earlier. As mentioned, Rachel, Catherine, and Steven spoke about how they observed their classmates' behaviour and were able to recognize classmates that reminded them of friends they had from their old school. This served as a social strategy because they were able to identify which classmates might be a good fit for them as friends. The participants displayed signs that they are making significant efforts to adjust to their new environment. Participants expressed that they are well versed in the school rules and routines by describing these in great detail. Zafir explained many of the classroom and school rules to me. The participants were asked what advice they would give to other newcomer children beginning school in Canada. Steven included the importance of knowing the school rules as a piece of advice he would offer to other newcomer children. Rachel explained her school routines and class schedule with significant detail, displaying that she was fully integrated within the class community. This serves as a social strategy because the participants are

displaying their inclination to fit in, and to be perceived as a competent member, within their classroom community.

Positive Outlook

The participants in this study all displayed a positive outlook as reflected in their attitudes towards school and their futures. This outlook allowed the children to maintain a sense of hope and optimism despite the challenges they had endured. For example, each participant was able to share their goals and aspirations for the future. In addition, participants acknowledged that accomplishing goals requires perseverance and determination, and as such, recognized that they may need to continue to work hard to accomplish these things. Soroush stated that he wishes to be a software engineer when he grows up. Soroush is passionate about coding and was watching videos about coding on YouTube when he learned about software engineers, and what they do. He shared that, "I found a video about them, and I was like, yeah, I really want to do this." He acknowledged that accomplishing this goal would require him to continue to learn and get better at coding. Steven wishes to be a teacher when he grows up, to have a big house, and to have his friends from China over for a visit. To make these wishes come true, Steven stated "I will work hard. I have to be able to afford the big house. And I will contact my friends and then they will be coming." Catherine also shared that she would like to be a teacher when she grows up, but specifically a Physical Education teacher because she loves P.E and teaching students. Rachel shared that "I want to travel a lot and stay in one place just like half a year and have a job. Then travel to the next place and do the same thing." She went on to say that she would be interested in becoming a cook or a designer and that she hopes to "have a life that will be very happy. No worry, very happy." Zafir stated that he would like to be a police officer so that he could help his

community. Zafir displayed optimism and a positive outlook by sharing that he was looking forward to grade two next year.

All participants demonstrated high levels of motivation to do well in school. Motivation relates to having a positive outlook because those who possess a positive outlook on life are more likely to be motivated to pursue their goals as they believe that things may work out in their favour (Seligman et al., 2009). For Soroush, this motivation was instilled in him, in part, by his family. When asked why he believed it was important to do well in school, he stated, "because you have to learn things to get a job" and that his mom taught him this. Rachel expressed her motivation to do well by persevering through feeling shy to ask for help when she didn't understand something. For example, "I feel like I don't want to ask. But if I don't ask, I don't know how to do this. So, if I have a problem, I often go for help." Rachel also said studying harder will help her make her dreams and goals come true. Steven had a similar response in which he said that "doing a good job at school is important because if I study well, I can become a teacher when I grow up." Zafir shared that he believes school is important and that he wants to do a good job when he is at school. While Catherine stated that she believed it is more important to have good relationships with others rather than getting good grades, she recounted feeling proud for doing well on her Math tests. She also demonstrated motivation by describing her inclination to ask other students for help when completing her work and assignments.

Thriving

All participants were able to share strategies they utilized to help themselves, and their emotions, when going through difficult times. For Soroush, recess, meditation, and fidgets were tools he used to regulate his emotions when he was feeling stressed or anxious. Zafir acknowledged that playing with his friends helps him to feel better when he is feeling sad or

having difficulty. Rachel shared that talking to friends and family helps her. She also shared that she utilizes internal strategies such as drawing or listening to music to help herself feel better. Catherine had a similar response in which she explained that she would recognize the need for self-care and will take a nap or go to sleep early if she finds she is having a difficult time. She then said that "conversations with my friends or family makes me feel better." Steven talked about how faith helped him during challenging times. For example, when asked what he does to feel better during a difficult time, he said "sometimes I'll pray when it's difficult."

Gratitude relates to one's ability to thrive as it requires individuals to recognize and appreciate the positive things they have in their lives (Algoe, 2012). All students in this study expressed gratitude for their circumstances, personal accomplishments, and supportive relationships. In our last interview, Steven stated that he felt gratitude because "Jesus helped [his] family." Zafir exhibited his gratitude for the people he loves by saying that they are the best part of his life. When asked who he loves, he replied "everyone." Catherine frequently expressed gratitude for her friends, family, teacher, class, and school. When drawing a picture of her favourite things about school, she said "I feel grateful to [my school] while painting this picture. My school helps me a lot, so I know that." As mentioned earlier, Catherine and Rachel both described feeling grateful to their family, friends, and teacher.

All participants displayed a positive self-image and sense of self despite the challenges they had experienced, as participants were easily able to tell me about their perceived strengths and skills. Positive self-image relates to the notion of thriving because maintaining a strong sense of self-worth despite the presence of challenges and obstacles reveals one's ability to cope (Diener & Biswas-Diener, 2008). Steven and Rachel both shared that they are really good at Art and Math. Participants were eager to share aspects of their identity that weren't necessarily

related to their performance at school. For instance, Steven shared that he likes to the guitar. Soroush informed me that he plays basketball, does coding lessons, and learns Taekwondo outside of school. Catherine told me about being a competitive swimmer in Korea and about her role as Vice President of her old elementary school. She also stated that she is good at swimming, Korean dance, playing the piano and drawing. Zafir described himself as an expert soccer player while Rachel shared more about her love for drawing, art, and photography. Rachel also said, "I think I'm good at running because I'm running very fast, I think."

All participants were also able to recall accomplishments they've experienced at their new school, leading them to feel proud of themselves. Catherine stated that she felt proud of herself for getting a perfect grade on her math test. Catherine said she also felt proud of herself once when there was a classmate who did not have a partner for an activity, and she wanted to help her classmate, so she offered to be her partner. Rachel and Steven frequently mentioned throughout the interviews that they really enjoyed Math class, as it was much easier than the math they were doing at their old schools in China. They described that in Math, they often felt proud of themselves because they were able to display their strengths in this area to their teacher and classmates. As mentioned earlier, Rachel shared that she often received a lot of praise from her teacher for her performance on Math tests, further instilling a sense of pride and accomplishment. Soroush described how he felt proud of himself for overcoming challenges learning addition and subtraction back in grade three, when he would have just began attending school again in Canada. He acknowledged that this was a significant challenge that was difficult when he was learning it, "but now it's really easy." Zafir struggled to determine an aspect of school that he finds challenging. Perhaps he is adjusting quite well to school considering he could not identify any major challenges he faces at school. Eventually he described a particular

craft activity his class was doing that he found difficult, but then he followed this up by saying "the rest is easy." Zafir also wanted to share that he finds counting particularly easy, and he was eager to show me how to skip count by 2s, 5s, and 10s, all the way up to large numbers, including 200.

One of the last interview questions had participants share what they like about their lives. Soroush stated that he likes everything, but if he had to list the top three, they are "school, computers, and eating." Rachel answered by saying "my family is all here, and I got many new friends. I can still talk to my [old] friends on the phone, and we can still have fun. Most important thing is my family is all here. I can stay with my family." Participants expressed positive attitudes and feelings towards their new lives in Canada. Soroush and Zafir also stated that they like living in Canada. Some participants also described Canada as a nice place to live. For instance, Rachel shared that although she felt afraid at first "I think this is a beautiful place" and "the people are nice and kind." Catherine stated that she likes living in Canada as "Canada is very large, and the nature is really beautiful." When asked about what some of the most important moments in his life has been, Steven replied "the best thing is coming here to Canada." Rachel also stated that coming to Canada was the most important thing that has happened to her so far in her life. In our last interview, Rachel remarked on her own development as she said...

> I was very scared, at first, and I didn't want to come. My family and friends are all in China and my English was not very good at that time. And I don't like to go out, I like to stay at home. So, I didn't want to go. But when I come, now I want to stay in Canada.

Chapter 5

Discussion

This research aimed to complement current research around the firsthand experiences of newcomer children in Canada, as told by themselves. Specifically, this study aimed to explore the notion of resilience and share how newcomer children exhibit resiliency by listening to their stories. Five newcomer children from China, Korea, Iran, and India who had resettled in Ontario and British Columbia, Canada within the past four years participated in three semi-structured interviews where they shared their experiences. Interview questions and the drawing tasks sought to answer two research questions:

1. What is the experience of adjusting to school in a new country like for newcomer children attending elementary school in Ontario and British Columbia?
2. What are the factors that hinder and support resiliency in newcomer children during periods of adjustment?

These research questions allowed me to gain insight into the phenomenon and provided me with a lens for recognizing resilience. This chapter begins by summarizing data that directly pertains to the research questions while placing the findings in the context of the research literature. Then, I address how the findings are related to resilience and counterstorytelling.

Research Question One: What is the experience of adjusting to school in a new country like for newcomer children attending elementary school in Ontario and British Columbia?

The participants in this study left their homes in four different countries and all migrated to Canada. Four of the participants arrived in British Columbia, whereas one settled in Ontario. This experience caused each participant to experience different and unique feelings about leaving all they had ever known to begin again in a foreign place. Despite each of the participant's

unique perspectives, migrating to Canada was a significant life event for all the participants. For some, migration may be perceived to be an exciting opportunity to travel and experience new things. For others, this journey may cause immense stress and anxiety. Although each of the participant's experiences differed from one another and was affected by different contextual factors, many similarities could be observed. Each participant felt all these things in combination, at one point or another, and to varying degrees. The participants encountered similar challenges while adjusting to school which included overcoming fear and worry, making friends, language learning, and gaining acceptance within their new social environments. However, the participants were able to quickly make friends, learn the rules and routines of their new environments, and positively adapt despite their initial stress and anxiety they experienced.

There is a wide range of both pre-and post-migration stressors that immigrants can experience. While some participants shared that they would miss their family, friends, and homes that they were leaving behind, all participants expressed a fondness towards their old homes, and an uncertainty about what would lay ahead for them in this new venture. This aligns with findings that separation from family members can be a source of pre-migration and post-migration stress (Schlein et al., 2021; Valencia, 2013; Todorova et al., 2005). Exposure to trauma and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) have been known to be a pre-migration stressor that can negatively affect one's capability to adjust positively in the new environment (Ghazali, 2004). The participants in this study did not express having experienced trauma or copious amounts of stress prior to immigrating to Canada. As such, it is unclear if trauma played a role in the adjustment experiences of these participants. Often, newcomer children take on more roles and responsibilities after settling in a new country such as helping to look after younger siblings (Diaków & Goforth, 2021) and acting as translators for their parents (Birman, 2006), which can

serve as a post-migration stressor due to the added pressures and responsibilities. For three participants, their parents spoke fluent English prior to immigrating to Canada. For two of these participants, they shared that their parents assisted them with homework and learning English. For the other two participants, their parents were learning English alongside them, but had support from other family and friends with similar cultural backgrounds in their communities. As such, acquiring new responsibilities after arriving in Canada was not seen to be a major stressor for the participants.

Starting school in Canada and having to make new friends was a significant post-migration stressor that caused all the participants to experience feelings of anxiety and nervousness. The findings from this study suggest the students viewed their family as a source of support, providing them with comfort and reassurance throughout their adjustment to life in Canada. This aligns with the finding that having positive family relationships helped immigrant and refugee youth cope with stressors associated with resettlement (Rossiter et al., 2015; Smith et al., 2021). The participants in this study all expressed appreciation for their families and stated that they could turn to their family members for support when they felt they were having difficulty or going through a challenging time. While age, gender, and religion can affect one's experiences with acculturation in different ways, it was unclear how these factors affected the participants' experiences adjusting to school in Canada. Gender and religious differences were not seen to cause different experiences for these participants. However, language barriers did not seem to be as prevalent for the youngest participant, compared to how severely it challenged the older participants, perhaps correlating with the belief that acculturation may occur more quickly for younger children (Roxas & Fruja, 2019). Further, it has been seen that it may be easier for immigrant children and youth to make friends if they are younger. As stated in chapter two,

newcomer students in British Columbia reported that it was easier for newcomers to make friends if they were arriving to an elementary school, rather than a high school in a study by Masinda, Jacquet, and Moore (2014). Zafir, aged seven and the youngest participant in this study, reported the least difficulty making friends compared to the other participants.

Four of the participants began school with very limited prior experience speaking English. For three of these same participants, they experienced significant anxiety and worry about not being able to communicate with their teacher and classmates. This was not the case for the youngest participant though, Zafir, who did not acknowledge experiencing language barriers at all, despite having only begun learning English in India one year prior to arriving in Canada. This aligns with the finding that older youth learning English tend to struggle with linguistic challenges compared to younger newcomers (Rossiter & Rossiter, 2009). All of the students in this study were placed in general classrooms, and Zafir, Catherine, Rachel and Steven received direct English instruction from a language support teacher. Known as direct immersion, advocates for this model state that it is beneficial for newcomer students as they are immersed in the host culture and able to learn and interact with their peers (Suárez-Orozco et al., 2009). However, scholars argue that supports to effectively implement this and achieve inclusion continue to be lacking (Taylor, 2008). A similar finding was found in this study as for Catherine, Rachel and Steven, the language barriers caused them to struggle to understand what was being taught and what was being asked of them, while also struggling to get to know their classmates and form social bonds. While Soroush did not experience any language barriers, having solely focused on learning English in Canada prior to entering public school, he still described feelings of nervousness and anxiety about not knowing anyone and worried about what it would be like to make new friends. For the three participants who did experience debilitating language barriers,

the language barriers appeared to serve as a form of social exclusion on a structural level, in which their opportunities for social interaction with others were significantly restricted.

Successful inclusion for newcomer students is threatened by language barriers in the social, emotional, and academic realms of school. It appeared that two of the participants, Rachel and Catherine, were quite reliant upon their classmates who acted as translators. Rachel and Catherine shared that these friends would translate for them within their friend group as their other classmates were unable to otherwise socialize with them. For these participants, they required constant language support from these peers in class as well in order to complete tasks and understand the curricular content. For Steven, on the other hand, he did not have access to a classmate that spoke the same languages as him when he began school in Canada. Rachel and Catherine advised that teachers should be prepared to support multilingual students learning English by pairing them with a student who shares the same language, seating the student near the teacher so they are more easily able to ask for help, and providing more explicit language support and translation tools. Despite growing calls from education researchers to support the development of multilingual children's languages simultaneously, teachers remain unequipped with the training or support to do so (Liu et al., 2017). The experiences of the participants in this study support this claim as none of the children shared being able to use or incorporate their first language in their learning, revealing the prevalence of monolinguistic language policies in Canadian schools. Monolinguistic language polices impede multilingual language development and restrict one's ability to access curriculum and express their knowledge. Thus, it appears that more language support was required to support their integration more effectively. Soroush did not share these same difficulties as he began school in Canada being able to speak and read English fluently, and therefore was not faced with the additional burden of language barriers,

exposing how monolinguistic language policies hold power over newcomers by maintaining inequitable power structures that can compromise their educational outcomes (Lau, 2022). The findings from this study support the claim from Yoon (2022) that language policy needs to be improved to give multilingual learners access to meaningful learning opportunities. Attending under-resourced schools has been noted to be a substantial risk factor negatively affecting the integration of newcomer children and youth (Suárez-Orozco et al., 2008, 2010). Smith and colleagues (2021) found as well that newcomer students felt that they did not receive enough in-class support that would help give them access to the curriculum. As the educational outcomes of newcomer children can be threatened by the lack of adequate language instruction limiting their access to curriculum, it can be predicted that this poses as a significant risk factor impeding successful integration (Suárez-Orozco et al., 2008, 2010). Critical Race Theory (CRT) in education calls in to question the structures that serve to advantage some students while disadvantaging others (Matsuda et al., 1993). In considering CRT paired with the experiences of these participants, we see how monolinguistic language policy and pedagogy in Canadian schools continues to uphold socially exclusive structures. Therefore, the findings from this study suggest that more can be done to support linguistically diverse students in-class, and that the current structures in place are not yet meeting the needs of these students.

Acculturation is a dual process in which the interactions between the dominant and minority culture significantly impact one's outcomes in the new environment (Berry, 2005). Schools then become a critical component of acculturation for immigrant children as it serves as the primary site of socialization. All the participants entered their new schools in Ontario and British Columbia feeling afraid, worried, and sad. The participants attributed these feelings to not knowing what to expect, language barriers, and the loss of familiar friends and faces. This

finding aligned with the findings from a study by Shakya et al. (2010) in which newcomer youth in Toronto, Canada shared that settlement related challenges caused them to experience stress, low self-esteem, anxiety, worry, sadness, and depression. For Soroush, these feelings were more complex in which part of themselves also felt excited to be going back to school again, after not being able to attend school for several months. Despite feelings of worry and anxiety, all the participants expressed an eagerness to adapt quickly and become integrated within their new environments. All the participants' families in this study came to Canada due to educational and/or job prospects. As expected, their experiences may differ from that of refugees and those who are forcibly displaced. As discussed in chapter two, immigrants settling in a new place with hopes of a better life may be more likely to view acculturation as being imperative to their success, whereas involuntary immigrants may be more likely to reject efforts to take on the practices of the host society (Sung & Wahl, 2021). In a sense, the children in these cases may have migrated involuntarily as their guardians made this decision for them. However, the participants' families shared that they moved to Canada for better education and career opportunities, so their families' positive and optimistic outlook on migration may have influenced their children's attitudes as well. For example, it has been seen that immigrant children are typically more prepared for resettlement compared to refugees (Chrismas & Chrismas, 2017). This may align with the findings from this study as the participants were observed to be adjusting positively in that they had made friends, enjoyed going to school, felt supported by their teacher, and continued to display a positive outlook months after their arrival. As the participants were not forcibly displaced or were forced to flee their home countries, this may also relate to why the participants did not share experiencing trauma prior to their migration journeys.

Research on acculturation posits integration as the most favourable outcome, in comparison to marginalization, assimilation and separation, as integration means that immigrants are accepted within the mainstream culture while still maintaining their cultural identities (Berry, 1980). However, the participants did not discuss their experiences with negotiating their cultural identities, and whether they were able to maintain their cultural practices and values in Canada. It appeared that they were driven to integrate themselves within their new environments by learning and adapting wholly to the practices and values of their new environments. This may suggest the presence of societal assimilative pressures, failing to make room for these aspects of their identities and lived experiences. For instance, when asked about what their peers or teachers knew about them, the students did not talk about their previous experiences living in another country, and what it was like there or what it was like to come to Canada. Instead, participants shared that their classmates and teachers knew what they were good at. Further, none of the students mentioned being able to use or speak their first language at school. Additionally, the participants did not describe having access to translation tools or resources. Instead, they had to seek out help for themselves when they needed in by asking the teacher, a friend, or nearby classmate. Research states that pressures to acquire English proficiency at the expense of the development of the first language can pose detrimental consequences on the identity formation of linguistically diverse students, and negatively affect how they perceive these aspects of their own identities (Cummins, 1986). In this way, the findings from this study suggest the prevalence of assimilative language policy and practices, as the newcomer students in this study faced pressures to blend in with the majority group while leaving aspects of their cultural identities behind.

Despite the challenges, the experience was made easier through acquiring friends, having a supportive teacher, and feeling included in a warm and welcoming school environment. An unwelcoming school environment, as well as negative interactions with peers, can serve as a post-migration stressor for immigrant youth entering schools (Suárez-Orozco et al., 2009). For the participants in this study, the children did not describe having difficulty making friends or getting along with their peers for reasons other than language barriers. All the children described their classmates as being kind, understanding, and willing to help. The participants especially expressed tremendous appreciation for their new friends. It was apparent that having these new friendships provided the children with comfort and a sense of belonging, assisting them in adjusting positively to their new school environment.

The context of the receiving environment can pose positive and negative implications for newcomer children adjusting to new environments. All participants shared the perception that their school environment was a positive factor supporting their adjustment. Each participant frequently exhibited positive feelings towards their schools, describing it as a safe place where people care about their well-being. It appeared that the teachers of these student participants played a key role in forming this perception as students were consistently vocal is sharing their appreciation and admiration for their teacher. Students are more likely to be motivated to do well in school when they feel that their teacher believes in them and their capabilities (Suárez-Orozco et al., 2008). This seemed to hold true for the participants in this study as they each displayed a high level of motivation to do well in order to please their teacher. They were also all proud to share accomplishments they had made in school and were eager to recall times when their teacher praised them for their efforts and accomplishments. This seemed to contradict a finding by Smith et al. (2021), who found that newcomer and immigrant youth shared that they often felt

misunderstood by Canadian teachers and peers at school. However, the participants in the study mentioned above were teenagers, who may be more aware of implicit and explicit forms of social exclusion in school, as well as other forms of discrimination and racism such as microaggressions, stereotypes, and lower expectations, compared to the younger participants in this research study. In other studies, immigrant, or refugee youth perceived teachers to be frustrated, too busy, or lacking the skills to offer assistance (Amjad, 2018; Rossiter et al., 2015). However, the findings from this study suggest that the newcomer students were able to form positive and trusting relationships with their teacher as when asked who helped them at school, their teachers were often at the top of the list. Again, this perception may be influenced by the age of the participants. Research suggests that immigrant children may view their teachers more positively compared to immigrant teenagers because of developmental age differences (Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001). For example, children may feel more dependent upon adult figures for help and therefore be more open to having a positive relationship with them compared to older youth and teens. It has been widely demonstrated that racialized immigrant and refugee children and youth face racism and discrimination upon migration to predominantly white countries. The participants in this study did not share that they have experienced racism or discrimination within their new schools. Only one participant acknowledged the role of race in shaping one's experiences and the potential for racial discrimination. Catherine expressed relief in stating that her peers held a positive perception of Korea, suggesting that her experience at her new school could have been vastly different. Additionally, this sentiment illuminates the ways in which racism and white privilege exhibits power over linguistically and culturally diverse communities and in shaping their lived experiences. The other four participants shared that there was a lot of diversity amongst their classmates and that they had friends from many different

countries. Again, due to the young age of the participants, they might not be as attuned in recognizing both explicit and implicit forms of racism, nor might they yet have the language to name or understand these behaviours (Spears Brown & Bigler, 2005).

It has been argued that Canada does not have enough programs in place to provide newcomer students with psychosocial support to assist with integration (Guo-Brennan & Guo-Brennan 2018, 2019a; Leblanc, 2017; Rossiter et al., 2015). The findings from this study support this claim as the participants in this study did not have the opportunity to access any type of additional support within their schools. The participants would have benefited from the chance to receive support for their emotional well-being as they all described feeling significant worry, fear, and anxiety upon beginning school in Canada. It has been noted that whole-school supports are necessary in helping the integration of newcomers because teachers by themselves cannot sufficiently meet the needs of these students (MacNevin, 2012; Stewart, 2011). Further, as discussed in chapter two, in the research literature more focus is given to how newcomer students integrate themselves within their new schools and social networks, rather than on the role of non-immigrant peers in welcoming these students. This may reflect a lack of inclusive pedagogy, structures, and policies in schools. Prevalent discriminatory beliefs and behaviours embedded within school structures and policies may shift the onus onto newcomers because creating a more inclusive environment may simply be perceived as not being a priority. While the students in this study expressed the belief that their schools were welcoming and inclusive, they often had difficulty expressing any concrete actions that their classmates, teachers, and schools took to make them feel this way. The participants also discussed a wide range of social strategies they utilized in order to initiate conversations and form bonds with their classmates, suggesting that it was up to them to foster their own sense of belonging and connection with

others. Further, each participant recalled moments when they felt lonely and were isolated from their peers. As such, the findings of this study suggest that more could have been done to help lessen the burden placed on these newcomer students.

Several of the participants shared that their experiences at the new schools was very different from what they were used to at their old schools. For instance, Rachel, Steven, and Catherine expressed that the curricular content was more complex, the workload was more demanding, and they were expected to complete many hours of homework each night. They also shared that there were less opportunities to play outside, socialize, and participate in tasks that they found to be fun and enjoyable. For newcomers beginning school in a new society, starkly different teaching methods and pedagogy can serve as a potential barrier for integration, in that adjusting to a new set of rules and expectations poses an additional challenge for newcomer students trying to adapt (Beacco et al., 2005). While Rachel, Catherine, and Steven favoured their new school environments over that of their old schools because of these differences, this was another thing to grapple within learning what the expectations are in their new environment.

Lastly, deficit frameworks can affect the experiences of newcomer children adjusting to school as misconceptions may become internalized, impacting their own self-esteem and self-worth. The participants in this study did not disclose the belief that their teachers held low expectations of them and their capabilities. Instead, the participants were proud to talk about the praise they've received from their teachers. In one instance, Rachel shared feeling proud when her teacher pointed out Rachel's success on a math test in front of the entire class. As stated in the findings, Rachel said "I was so proud because one time my teacher said, 'Oh, she is learning English and she got the highest mark in our class!' That moment, I was so proud of myself." Despite the positive effect this statement appeared to have on Rachel and her self-esteem, this

statement reveals the presence of deficit thinking in which the teacher seemed to express surprise in response to Rachel performing so well in math, considering her low proficiency in English at the time. Overemphasizing Rachel's lack of English proficiency may cloud this teacher's ability to acknowledge the prior knowledge and lived experiences Rachel possesses. Further, emphasizing Rachel's capabilities in math in front of the rest of the class without recognizing the many other aspects of her identity may perpetuate stereotypes amongst her peers and classmates. For instance, Kim and Kirpalani (2022) state that...

> the Model Minority Myth paints Asians as being universally smart, hardworking, obedient, and self-disciplined…these stereotypes, while framed in either a positive or negative light, support the image of Asian Canadians as being solely driven by professional and socioeconomic success, dehumanizing them in comparison to other groups. (p. 1)

Goodwin's framework of knowledge domains (2010) states that teachers must engage in critical questioning to confront their own beliefs and assumptions, gain a holistic understanding of their students, and implement a culturally response curriculum that promotes social justice as teachers are educational stakeholders and play a role in influencing how newcomer students are received amongst the wider class environment. Deficit frameworks perpetuated in education research and policy can infiltrate stakeholder's perceptions of how newcomers experience this transition and overemphasize the challenges and barriers they face while failing to acknowledge the strengths, knowledge, and experiences they possess. Counterstorytelling involves using personal narratives as a tool for understanding the lived experiences of marginalized individuals. CRT states that counterstories are important because they help to question and dismantle the dominant narratives in society that are built upon inequitable and discriminatory assumptions.

The findings reveal that the students in this study continued to persevere and thrive despite the looming presence of structures, policies, and practices that threatened their success. The participants were motivated to positively adapt to their new environments, do well in school, and achieve success. They exhibited prosocial behaviours, often pushing themselves out of their comfort zones to interact with their classmates and form friendships, all the while feeling nervous and afraid to do so. They utilized their individual strengths and coping skills to help them navigate the new environment and find support. They displayed optimism for the future in sharing their goals and aspirations. These findings serve to challenge the deficit discourse as outlined in chapter two. Through listening to their experiences and counterstories, we bear witness to their fortitude and personal agency to persevere and overcome.

Research Question Two: What are the factors that hinder and support resiliency in newcomer children during periods of adjustment?

As discussed in chapter two, resilience is understood as "both an individual's capacity to navigate to health resources and a condition of the individual's family, community, and culture to provide these resources in culturally meaningful ways" (Ungar, 2006, p. 5). To be deemed resilient, individuals should be adapting positively despite the presence or risk of adversity. Masten and colleagues (2009) state that...

> in studies of resilient children and youth, typical measures of good outcome assess the following domains: academic achievement (grades and test scores, staying in school, graduating from high school); conduct (rule-abiding behaviour vs. antisocial behavior); peer acceptance and friendship; normative mental health (few symptoms of internalizing or externalizing behavior problems); and involvement in age-appropriate activities (extra-curricular activities, sports, community service). (p. 120)

Newcomer children in this study were faced with significant adversity in having to leave their friends, family, and homes to begin again in a new and unfamiliar place. Upon relocation, the participants had to relearn a new set of guiding rules, routines, and norms that would allow them to gain access into their new environment. For any child moving to a new school, putting forth efforts to make new friends can be a scary and daunting task. However, some participants faced additional challenges such as language barriers and suffered feelings of loneliness and isolation as a result. Further, language barriers also prevented some of the participants from being able to participate fully in the classroom learning activities which caused the students to feel poorly about themselves and their capabilities at times. Additionally, a lack of supports and culturally inclusive pedagogy further exacerbated these challenges. Therefore, the participants in this study were faced with significant adversity that they were to overcome to adapt successfully within their new environment. The International Resilience Project (Ungar, 2006) states that...

> the more comprehensive and progressive definition of resilience promoted by the IRP emphasizes both the individual's role in nurturing and sustaining his or her well-being and the relational, social and cultural factors that must be available and accessible to individuals who face multiple risks. (p. 5)

Therefore, this view of resilience acknowledges both the presence of risk and protective factors that can hinder or support one's capacity for resilience. In light of these factors, the IRP believes then that resilience is related to individual traits, relationship factors, the community context, and cultural factors.

The values of the school culture and environment, as well as the inherent attitudes towards welcoming newcomers can be a factor that affects the resilience of newcomers, in either positive or negative ways. The participants in this study unanimously agreed that their

classmates, teachers, and schools in general made efforts to include them and support their adaptation. Several studies have found that schools that provide opportunities for newcomer students to interact through leadership opportunities, tutoring, mentorship, and extra-curricular activities can create an environment where students feel that they belong (Hamilton-Hinch et al., 2021; Hopkins et al., 2013; James, 2019; Pryce et al., 2019). A few participants in this study enthusiastically talked about participating in interschool initiatives such as lunch monitors, buddy programs, and clubs. Further, these participants sought out these opportunities to get involved within their wider school community on their own. It was clear that these were positive experiences that provided the participants with meaningful opportunities to engage with their peers outside of regular classroom activities. The participants demonstrated positive adaptation through their eagerness to participate in these extracurriculars. As such, the findings reported here seem to support the claim that school-wide approaches to integrating newcomer students can support their integration and support resilience. However, as discussed in answering the first research question, several of the participants expressed the need for more direct language support at school.

Lacking appropriate resources to support newcomer children is a risk factor for achieving successful integration at school (Suárez-Orozco et al., 2008, 2010). While several of the participants received direct English instruction from an ELL teacher, Rachel, Steven, and Catherine expressed the need for more in-class support as they often struggled to access the curriculum and complete assignments. This was a potential risk factor for these children as this barrier could negatively impact their educational outcomes as well as their self-esteem (Ngo & Schleifer, 2005). The participants appeared to be overcoming this challenge however as they exhibited agency by seeking out help from their teacher, peers and/or other classmates who

shared the same language. Rossiter and Rossiter (2009) state that in general, older newcomer children learning English face greater linguistic challenges compared to younger newcomer children. The data reported here suggests a similar finding in that the two oldest participants, Rachel, and Catherine, described at length how language barriers made everything much more difficult whereas the youngest participant, Zafir, did not.

Conflicting structures and values embedded within the school structure can also pose as a potential risk factor for newcomer children as they may be faced with the additional obstacle of having to relearn a new set of rules, norms, and expectations to become integrated within their new environment (Beacco et al., 2005). While several of the participants expressed the significant differences between their old schools and their new schools, they continued to perceive their new schools in a positive light. Their responses suggest that in many ways, they viewed their new schools as an improvement due to the ways in which their new schools nurtured their overall happiness and well-being. Therefore, this did not appear to be a factor actively hindering the resilience of the participants as the culture of the new environment allowed them to have more free time, both at school and at home, as well as less exposure to rigorous academic pressures and expectations. However, as discussed in chapter two, younger newcomer children appear to have an easier time adapting compared to older newcomer youth so this may have contributed to their ease in adapting to a new and very different school environment. Taken together, these findings emphasize the impact that schools have in influencing how newcomer students are integrated within the school environment.

Making friends was a significant motivator for all participants in positively adapting to their new school environment. All the participants demonstrated resilience and positive adaptation by consistently displaying a strong social orientation and describing a range of social

strategies they used to initiate bonds. It appears that all participants were successful in this pursuit of peer acceptance as each participant continually reiterated the positive impact that their friends had on their own well-being, and their feelings of belonging within their school. Relationships and social support foster resilience as they protect against anxiety and depression while also supporting academic success (Kia-Keating & Ellis, 2007; Kovacev, 2004; Suárez-Orozco et al., 2009). Initial observations from this study suggest the same as the participants shared that they felt that their friends cared about their well-being and that they could talk to their friends about their difficulties. For some of the participants, language barriers were a potential risk factor that could have had the power to hinder their capacity for resiliency. This was due to the fact that the language barriers caused the participants to experience loneliness and isolation at times. During resettlement, newcomers are at risk for facing social exclusion as they can experience otherness and marginalization (Oikonomidoy, 2007; Li, 2010; Shin, 2012). As discussed in chapter two, it has been widely observed that newcomer children experience social exclusion at school (Fangen et al., 2012). While it appeared that language barriers restricted inclusion for some of the participants at first, the participants perceived their schools to be a welcoming place in which they were able to find friends and form meaningful relationships. All students expressed a deep sense of belonging and attachment to their new friends. They perceived that social support was available to them and shared very positive feelings about their peers and expressed feeling like they belonged within their classroom and school. This proved to be an important protective factor for the participants as poor peer interactions can negatively affect one's self-esteem and social anxiety (Suárez-Orozco et al., 2009). Low self-esteem or lingering social anxiety was not observed in any of the participants upon completion of data collection. Further, experiencing racism and discrimination in the new environment is a

significant risk factor in hindering one's capacity for resilience as experiencing racial discrimination after resettlement affects how newcomers perceive their identities and their self-worth (Khanlou & Crawford, 2006). The participants in this study did not describe experiences in which they were subjected to direct and/or indirect forms of racial discrimination at school or in their new communities. However, due to the young age of the participants, the participants might not yet be equipped with the understanding or language to name and identify direct and/or indirect forms of racial discrimination. It has been observed that ethnic communities are a protective factor in that they can provide newcomer students with feelings of shared identity and support (Bal & Arzubiaga, 2014). Further, newcomer students have found it easier to make friends when their classmates share the same race/ethnicity (Brenner & Crosnoe, 2011). A similar finding was observed in this study as both Rachel and Catherine described forming a close bond with peers that shared the same language and ethnicity. Steven, Rachel, Catherine, and Zafir all expressed that their classes were very diverse, and that they had made friends who had also moved to Canada from different countries. Organizations and community services supporting immigrants and refugees have been successful in promoting resilience in newcomers by providing them with opportunities to interact with people who also have similar experiences with migration and resettlement (McCloud, 2015). As such, the participants may have taken comfort in having classmates who had similar experiences with migration and resettlement. Therefore, these findings reported here appear to suggest this claim in that the participants were adapting positively, perhaps due in part to making friends with peers who can relate to having shared life experiences.

As discussed in chapter two, attachment to caregivers and family stability has been observed to be a protective factor for fostering resilience in immigrant and refugee children

(Betancourt & Khan, 2008; Este & Van Ngo, 2011). In Canada, immigrant and refugee youth have shared that positive familial relationships helped them overcome negative experiences throughout migration (Rossiter et al., 2015). The findings from this study support these assumptions as positive relationships were observed to be a significant protective factor for the participants in this study as well. Firstly, throughout the ups and downs of the shared experience, all the children expressed their love and appreciation for their families. It was clear that, for these children, family remained a constant and familiar source of support in their new and unfamiliar worlds. The IRP (Ungar, 2006) proposes that parenting that allows for emotional expression to meet the child's needs is a protective factor that helps build resilience in children. A similar finding was found in this study in which the participants shared that their family was important to them and were a significant source of emotional support. This suggests that in knowing they had the unwavering love and support of their families, the children maintained a positive outlook due to the confidence instilled in them through their family's support.

Resilience studies in children reveal the impact teachers can have in building or hindering resilience in their students. Caring teachers have been recognized as a protective factor in which they can instill belonging, build confidence, support integration, and encourage risk taking (Selimos & Daniel, 2017; Thorstensson, 2013; Davies, 2008; Hos, 2016). In adjusting to their new schools in Canada, the participants saw a kind and trustworthy figure in their teachers. As such, the findings from this study support that teachers and their attitudes and beliefs towards inclusivity can have an effect on the integration of newcomers, as well as their capacity for resilience. For each participant, their teacher was someone that they could count on when they needed help. The teachers, as described by the participants, made the students feel welcome and genuinely cared about them, their well-being, and their success. It was clear that the students felt

they were in a safe space where they could ask their teacher for help without fearing judgement. As such, it appeared that each of the participant's teachers successfully created a welcoming environment that nurtured the children's capacity for resilience. The IRP (Ungar, 2006) proposes that having a positive role model or mentor is a protective factor in nurturing resilience. For several of the participants, it appeared that the students found such a role model in their teacher. Rachel explicitly stated that her teacher was her role model, and her goals and aspirations for the future closely mimicked the lived experiences of her teacher in which Rachel shared that her teacher had travelled to many different places over the course of her life. Rachel stated that she, like her teacher, hopes that one day she will live a life full of travel and adventure. Both Steven and Catherine shared that they want to be teachers when they grow up. While their goal to become a teacher one day may be influenced by a variety of factors, this may also reflect the positive relationship they have with their teacher, and allude to the positive light in which they see their teacher. Several studies have found that negative relationships with teachers can be a risk factor for newcomer students (e.g., Amjad, 2018; Rossiter et al., 2015). Teachers may possess negative attitudes and beliefs of newcomers, or they may lack the knowledge of how best to meet their needs leading them to become dismissive or frustrated. These attitudes and beliefs may become internalized by their newcomer students, which could negatively affect their self-esteem, sense of belonging, as well as their perceived value within the school community. This was not observed in the experiences of the participants in this study, as the participants eagerly expressed gratitude towards their teacher for their willingness to help. Several of the participants proudly recalled moments when they received praise from their teacher for how well they were doing in school.

As discussed in chapter two, newcomer children and youth often exhibit a wide range of individual traits as well as coping mechanism that promote resilience such as emotional regulation, high aspirations, motivation, agency, and optimism (Betancourt & Khan, 2008; Este & Van Ngo, 2011). Similarly, the participants in this study each displayed a wide range of individual traits related to resilience, as also seen in the model created by the IRP. The participants were able to solve problems they encountered by utilizing social strategies to seek out help when they needed it. They displayed agency by effectively using social strategies to combat their feelings of loneliness and isolation and assist themselves in integrating within the school community. They all demonstrated self-efficacy in that they were able to recognize their strengths, capabilities, and achievements. The participants were eager to talk about their goals and aspirations for the future, while also acknowledging the preparation and planning that goes into achieving a goal. In a study conducted by Smith et al. (2021), newcomer children displayed having patience, were optimistic about their futures, and were able to remain positive despite the difficulties they encountered. Similarly, each of the participants displayed a positive outlook in that they expressed gratitude for all that they had, and had gone through, while looking forward to the future with hope and optimism. Additionally, they also reported that newcomer youth participants in their study shared that newcomers should try to integrate themselves into the new society by asking questions, seeking help, talking to their classmates, and getting involved in their communities. Participants in this study expressed a similar response as they encouraged other newcomers to push themselves out of their comfort zones to assist their own integration as well. Several of the participants clearly demonstrated having empathy for others. For example, Catherine stated one of her proudest moments was partnering with a classmate who needed one. Rachel expressed her eagerness to participate in a buddy program, determined to provide her

younger buddy with positive experiences. Zafir was quick to share what he would do to help other newcomer students feel welcome within his classroom. The two oldest participants each in grade 7, Rachel and Catherine, used humour in the way they recalled their migration experiences, laughing while remembering times when they felt very afraid and uncertain. In a study by Rossiter and colleagues (2015) found that immigrant and refugee children used their faith as coping mechanism, utilizing it to gain internal support and a sense of stability. A similar finding was found here in which Steven stated that he would pray when having difficulty adjusting to his new life in Canada. Several other participants reported using other cognitive strategies to regulate their emotions and soothe their anxiety. As discussed, the strategies participants used included meditation, self-regulating with therapeutic manipulatives, listening to music, and drawing. They also shared that they would talk about their emotions with friends and family. Several researchers reported that newcomer youth viewed education as being important and valuable in their transition to life in Canada (e.g., Krahn & Taylor, 2005; Devine, 2011). The data reported here supports this assumption as all the participants stated their belief that school is important, as it leads to more opportunities and success in the future. Further, they exhibited this as well through their motivations to do well in school and through their pride in their academic achievements. Lastly, each of the participants was not overly dependent upon their teachers and classmates as they could describe in great detail the classroom rules and their responsibilities, suggesting that they had become active and engaged members within their classroom community. As such, all the participants conveyed their sense of duty to themselves and others, as was evident their motivation to succeed and adapt. Taken together, these results suggest that newcomer children draw upon a wealth of inner resources to successfully adapt to unfamiliar environments. The participants' unwavering determination, optimism, and positivity is a

testament to their strength and resilience. In the face of challenge and uncertainty… they persisted, and they triumphed.

Chapter 6

Conclusion

Summary of Major Findings

The newcomer participants in this study were found to be adapting positively to their new schools in Canada. However, the participants response's raised new questions about how educational policy and practice in Canada can be improved to support the acculturation of immigrant and refugee students. While I was delighted to hear the participants' high regard and praise for their schools, the findings from this study appear to align with claims that monolinguistic and assimilative pedagogy and practice continue to be ever present in Canadian public schools. As discussed, policy has the power to improve inclusion and achieve social justice through clearly articulating the obligation to protect and nurture our students' diverse cultural identities and experiences. This chapter begins by outlining the study limitations. Then, I discuss the implications for future research in this field. Finally, I present educational implications and recommendations for practice as they specifically relate to teachers, school leaders, and policymakers.

Study Limitations

This research study has several limitations. Firstly, this research study utilized a small sample size of five newcomer students. While this allowed me to attain in-depth data, this may be considered as a limitation because the findings may be heavily dependent on context and not generalizable to other students. Secondly, even though each of the five participants were able to communicate effectively in English, the participants may have been better able to convey their emotions and tell their stories more effectively in their first languages. Interpreters were not used in this study in order to help protect confidentiality and drawing tasks were chosen as a form of

data collection in order to address potential linguistic and cultural barriers. As discussed in chapter three, due to an unfortunate oversight during the process of obtaining ethics approval, the participants' drawings were not included in the final report as the Child Assent form did not explicitly ask for their permission to include the drawings. While the drawing tasks proved to be a beneficial strategy for beginning interviews and engaging the child participants, the drawings were not included as an additional source of data. Lastly, at the time of data collection several of the participants had only been in Canada for less than one year. As the processes involved in acculturation span years, the stories told here offer a snapshot of what this experience is like. Despite these limitations, the findings from this study provide many meaningful insights pertaining to the lived experiences of newcomer students adapting to school in Canada.

Implications for Future Research

Future studies can expand the scope of this research study by recruiting a larger sample size of participants to increase our understanding of what the experience is like for newcomer students as they adapt to school in Canada. Collecting data from a wider range of participants and different perspectives may contribute to a more whole story. Further, while this research study initially sought to explore the experiences of newcomer children in the primary grades (kindergarten to grade three), recruitment was expanded to include grades four to seven as students in the younger grades proved to be a difficult population to access. As such, there remains a gap in the literature pertaining to how newcomer students in the younger years perceive and experience these processes. Next, recruiting participants from multiple sites in other provinces across Canada may provide interesting insight into how policies around equity, inclusion, and diversity differ and effect the experiences of newcomers. Conducting longitudinal

research with a larger sample size will provide a broader understanding into newcomer children's experiences and outcomes over time.

The results from this study build on existing evidence of newcomer children's resilience, and specifically their ability to use both internal and external supports to help themselves navigate through the processes of acculturation and adaptation. While previous research has focused on the barriers that newcomer immigrant and refugee children face in the Canadian education system, these results show that the participants in this study were adapting positively. These findings suggest that despite the presence of obstacles and barriers to inclusion in their schools, the participants displayed optimism, perseverance, and determination. Therefore, future research could benefit from the continued use of counterstories to uncover the lived experiences of newcomer children. Further, using arts-based tasks with the children participants proved to be a useful interview technique to engage the participants. Future research would benefit from the continued use of arts-based research to disrupt deficit narratives and empower these participants to be collaborators in the research.

The fact that the participants often had to find their own strategies to find help and seek out support suggest that more needs to be done to assist newcomer children as they adapt. For instance, language barriers were shown to be a significant barrier to inclusion in which the participants had to seek out help from friends and classmates who shared the same language. Additionally, the findings suggest that the linguistically diverse participants required much support from their teacher to complete their academic work and tasks because of the language barrier. This area would benefit from future research that examines how to best support linguistically diverse students when they are in their general classrooms, learning curricular content without the direct support of a language teacher.

The findings from this study suggest that it was the primary responsibility of the newcomer participants to integrate themselves within their new school and class environments, as the participants often struggled to identify what their peers and classmates did to welcome them. Further, the participants described social strategies they used in order to initiate contact with their classmates in order to make friends. A future area of research could examine the role of non-immigrant students in welcoming students with migration backgrounds, as well as their attitudes towards making their classroom a more inclusive space. Doing so may emphasize the importance of teachers implementing culturally responsive pedagogy to create more inclusive learning spaces and prepare all students to be global citizens.

Educational Implications and Recommendations for Practice

For Teachers

As discussed in chapter two, the process of acculturation is conceptualized as a dual process in which the host society plays a significant role in impacting the experiences and outcomes of newcomers. Integration is considered to be the most desirable outcome of acculturation in which newcomers are accepted within the host culture while still maintaining a balance with their home culture (Berry, 1980). Tensions arise then when we recognize the power that the host society holds in facilitating or restricting the integration of immigrants and refugees. Therefore, schools become a critical piece to examine as they are among the first sites in which newcomer children gain experience with the host culture. The findings from this study mirror suggestions from educational researchers regarding ways to effectively implement more culturally responsive teaching pedagogy and practices in schools.

Ladson-Billings (1995) gained international recognition for their model of culturally responsive pedagogy which aims to honour the culture, ways of knowing, and lived experiences

of marginalized students in order to maintain their cultural integrity and support their academic success. CRP also strives to instill students with critical consciousness by strengthening their ability to recognize and confront societal inequities (Ladson-Billings, 1995). Teachers' ability to implement CRP effectively depends on their ability to understand the role of culture, recognize social inequities as well as their own biases and positionality, foster positive social interactions among students, and build an inclusive class community.

Having a strong sense of one's cultural identity is an indicator of positive adjustment and well-being (Ngo & Schleifer, 2005; Cummins et al., 2015). Additionally, a positive cultural identity is associated with improved academic outcomes and social integration (Jaret & Reitzes, 2009). As such, it is critical that teachers understand the importance of culture, and the role it plays in the formation of one's identity. This requires teachers to acknowledge and address their own implicit biases, and how this affects the way they receive newcomer students. Cultural and linguistic differences can strain student-teacher relationships, putting teachers at risk of adopting a deficit mindset in which they hold lower expectations for diverse students due to communicative barriers and cultural bias, as revealed in the finding that teachers with an immigrant or refugee background are better able to empathize with and relate to newcomer students. Therefore, it is imperative that teachers view all their students as being capable of achieving success. The findings of this study suggest that the participants felt pressure to adapt quickly and become integrated within the host culture, and when asked about what their teachers and peers knew about them, the participants listed only listed a few surface-level characteristics. Ladson-Billings (1995) states that "culturally relevant teachers utilize students' culture as a vehicle for learning" (p. 161). This requires teachers to know their students and their backgrounds so that they can tap into their experiences and create more meaningful and

culturally relevant learning experiences. Including learning materials that are culturally relevant and reflect the lived experiences of students as been found to be an effective strategy in creating an inclusive learning environment, as students get to see their identities reflected in a positive light and learn more about the experiences of those with different backgrounds. Cummins and Early's (2011) development of *identity texts* have been observed to be an effective pedagogical tool for honoring students' lived experiences in which students can create a piece of work that tells their story. It has been observed that when students have the opportunity to share their identity text with an audience, they get to experience positive affirmation. Teachers can also gain a deeper understanding by establishing relationships with their newcomer students' families and allowing them to be participants in their child's learning as well.

Teachers can create a welcoming classroom community by creating opportunities for students to learn with and from each other. As all students can benefit from having a greater understanding of the world, teachers can incorporate opportunities that promote cultural exchange by allowing students to share their cultural knowledge and traditions if they would like to do so. It appeared that the participants' opportunities to share their cultural backgrounds in their new classrooms were limited. Teachers can begin to improve their cultural competence and get to understand their immigrant students better by seeking to learn about their cultural backgrounds and experiences. Additionally, through their descriptions of experiencing isolation and loneliness and having to push past feelings of fear and nervousness to try and make friends, it appeared that the non-immigrant students could have done more to welcome their newcomer classmates. Teachers can instill students with the knowledge of how best to welcome newcomer students within their classroom, and how to make them feel comfortable and safe. Teachers need to ensure that they are not perpetuating harmful stereotypes and deficit frameworks that may be

passed on and communicated to non-immigrant students. CRP encourages students to participate in discussions surrounding discrimination and inequities in the world, and within their own communities, in order to build their own critical consciousness (Ladson-Billings, 1995). CRP outlines the importance of social relationships in encouraging students to achieve academic success, cultural competence, and critical consciousness. Teachers effectively implementing CRP "maintain fluid student-teacher relationships, demonstrate a connectedness with all of the students, develop a community of learners, [and] encourage students to learn collaboratively and be responsible for one another" (Ladson-Billings, 1995, p. 17). Maintaining fluid teacher-student relationships means centering student voice so that students can display their knowledge and teach their peers. Creating a community of learners can be achieved by creating opportunities for collaboration and teamwork, in which students are encouraged to support to success of their classmates. Rachel described learning experiences like this in her classroom, and they appeared to be quite memorable and impactful in which she was she able to work alongside her peers towards a common goal and develop bonds at the same time, leading to a greater sense of belonging.

The participants in this study expressed the need for more language supports. This is especially pertinent as it may take two to three years for newcomer students to acquire basic interpersonal communication skills, and five to seven years to develop academic language proficiency necessary for content-based learning (Cummins, 2000). Teachers can create opportunities for their newcomer students to express their knowledge and understanding by utilizing their first language. Translanguaging has been observed to be an effective pedagogical tool that facilitates and improves the development of students' multiple languages simultaneously, giving them an opportunity to express themselves and communicate in

circumstances where they may not otherwise be able to. Ladson-Billings (1995) states that teachers who effectively implement CRP believe in Freire's notion of "teaching as mining" (1974, p. 76) in which teachers view their students' experiences as being funds of knowledge that they can tap into to extract knowledge. Allowing students to use their multiple languages in the classroom is a way to pull knowledge out. Further, this communicates to the student that their diverse language knowledge and experience has value, increasing pride and confidence in their identity (Cummins et al., 2005). Bilingual materials, visual aids, and translation tools should also be easily accessible to assist linguistically diverse students access the curriculum and participate within their classroom. As observed in this study, partnering newcomer students with a peer is an effective strategy for ensuring that the student has access to an additional source of support. This may also help to facilitate their social integration and assist them in forming social bonds. As described by the participants, asking a classmate for help often established a connection and opened the door for more communication and interaction. Additionally, the participants shared that having someone introduce them to classmates was useful in finding friends. Partnering students based on shared linguistic backgrounds was beneficial for supporting several of the participants in this study. Having access to a peer translator allowed them to participate in class activities while also nurturing their perceived competence and self-esteem.

For School Leaders

School leaders also have an important role to play in creating an inclusive school environment for newcomers as they have the power to impact teachers, enact procedures, and ultimately, create change (Day et al., 2016). The duties of school leaders include leading and evaluating staff, developing plans and strategies to the meet the needs of students, serving as a liaison between the school and the community, organizing professional development

opportunities for staff, enforcing school and district policies, fostering a welcoming and inclusive environment, and overseeing the daily operations of the school (Day et al., 2016; UNESCO, 2018). As such, school leaders are positioned to be able to establish a whole-school approach and commitment to implementing CRP. School leaders can work to establish a shared school vision and outline goals for implementing CRP in classrooms. Doing so can serve to create accountability and opportunities for teachers to engage in discussion about how to effectively implement these practices. School leaders can also seek out ongoing opportunities for professional development that encourages teachers to continuously and critically reflect upon their own personal practice and beliefs. Policies and practices should be examined to ensure that they are promoting equity and inclusion. School leaders can involve parents, family, and community members in this process to ensure that all perspectives and experiences are heard. Additionally, engaging families and community members through the development of strong partnerships that allow families to be involved in their child's education promotes inclusivity. Doing so would help to create a sense of belonging for both students and their families. Lastly, school leaders must see the value in diversifying staff in supporting students from diverse backgrounds (Antonio, 2003) and creating a more culturally diverse learning environment.

For Policymakers

Policymakers play a critical role in ensuring the proponents of CRP are embedded within school structures and implemented through policy and practice. Education policymakers can support the implementation of CRP in schools by targeting curriculum development, teacher education programs, hiring practices, and approaches to assessment. Policymakers can establish curricular standards and expectations that include diverse perspectives, cultures, and experiences. Further, they can allocate funding to provide schools with culturally relevant resources and

learning materials that reflect a wide range of perspectives. Additionally, policymakers can involve community members in creating and identifying culturally relevant learning materials. Next, teacher education programs must assist prospective teachers in building cultural competency as a foundational piece of their training rather than through single courses and isolated learning experiences. This would assist teachers without an immigration background in being better prepared to respond to the needs of students from diverse backgrounds to provide them with inclusive and equitable learning opportunities. Policymakers can also contribute to recruiting, hiring, and retaining a more diversified teacher workforce. This would involve identifying and removing barriers that prevent marginalized individuals from pursuing teaching careers. More efforts could be made to recruit multilingual teachers and teachers from diverse backgrounds. Policymakers can ensure that schools are in actuality the neutral sites they are intended to be, in which diverse teachers and staff can work in a workplace that is free from racism and discrimination. Lastly, policymakers can implement CRP by approaching assessment in a way that ensuring assessment items are culturally relevant, incorporate student voice, allow for accommodations, and can be translated.

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Appendix A

Letter of Information and Consent form

Letter of Information and Consent Form for Parents (Consent for Child)

Study Title: Exploring the Experiences of Newcomer Children in School Through Counterstories: A Multiple Case Study

Name of Principal Investigator: Emma Ewing-Nagy, M.Ed. Candidate, Faculty of Education, Queen's University
Name of Supervisor*:* Dr. Alana Butler, Ph.D., Faculty of Education, Queen's University

Dear Parent/Guardian:

I am inviting children who are recent immigrants to Canada to participate in a research study. The purpose of this study is to learn more about the experiences of newcomer children in grades 1-8 attending publicly funded schools in Canada. To learn more about the experiences of immigrant children in Canada, I will be conducting interviews with your child for and have them participate in a drawing activity. The interviews will be audio-recorded and later transcribed.

The purpose of this form is to provide you with information about the study and to gain permission for your child to participate in voice-recorded interviews and a drawing activity.

If you agree to have your child take part, I will interview your child three times either in-person or via virtual conferencing to ask them questions about their experiences at school. During each interview, your child will also work on one drawing activity that I give them about themselves and their experiences at school. The three interviews will each last approximately **30-minutes**, for a total of one and a half hours. The three interviews will be held a minimum of **two weeks apart**. During the interviews, I will voice-record the conversations for accuracy and transcribe them. You will be required to have access to drawing materials (i.e., pencil, crayons, pencil crayons, paper, etc.). You will also be required to email a photograph or scanned copy of your child's drawing prior to each of the interviews. If your child wishes, you can be in the room with them during the interviews and meetings, but you cannot answer the questions or speak for them. In total, your child's participation in the interview and drawing activity for this study will take place over the course of **approximately 2-3 months**, with **1.5 hours** of interviews with me.

There is a risk that some of the questions or drawings might be upsetting to your child because they might be about bad memories, therefore there is some psychological or emotional risk for participating in this study. Because your child may be from a different language or cultural background from me, there may be risks of language and/or cultural sensitivities. Caution will always be used to mitigate sensitivities through cultural inclusion. If your child reveals they are enduring some form of harm/abuse at school or at home and are in need of protection, this information would immediately be communicated to the Children's Aid Society. If your child feels upset after the interview, please call one of the following aid lines, where you may access crisis counselling.

Vancouver	Kingston
Kids Help Phone 1-800-668-6868 DIVERSEcity's Child and Youth Mental Health Couselling 604-547-1202 Newcomer Wellness Hub 236-878-4630	Telephone Aid Line Kingston 613-544-4229 Kids Help Phone 1-800-668-6868 Resolve Counselling Services Canada 1-800-409-4499

While there are no direct benefits to your child as a participant, the information from this study will help teachers learn about how they can help immigrant students in school.

Participation is voluntary and your child will only be in the study if they want to and if you give them permission. Your child does not have to answer any questions or draw things that they do not want to. Your child can stop participating in the study at any time without consequences by saying "stop" or by raising their hand. Participating or not participating in this study will not affect your child's ability to use the facilities at the community organization you attend. Your child may leave the study up until two months after you both say yes to have them in it. You and your child can also ask to have their information taken out of the study up until two months after you both say yes to having your child in the study. If your child wishes to withdraw (leave the study) and/or have part or all of their information taken out of the study, you can email me at 18een@queensu.ca.

Your child's confidentiality (personal information) will be kept safe, except where required by law. No photographs of your child will be taken. In all information that is shared with the public, I will change your child's name with a pseudonym (fake name). Virtual interviews will be held over Zoom which has been selected for its security measures. Participants will be sent meeting invites via email and will require a passcode to enter the meeting. In addition, I will use Zoom's Waiting Room feature and Meeting Lock feature to ensure that third parties are unable to access the virtual conference. The study data will be saved in a computer file that will be protected by a password. The file that links real names with pseudonyms will be kept safely and in a separate file. I will keep your child's data safely for five years per Queen's University Policy. After five years, the study data and the file with your child's pseudonym will be deleted. The code file identifying your child's pseudonym and study ID number will be destroyed five years after study closure. The Queen's University retention policy for research records is a minimum of 5 years. After this time, the research supervisor will be responsible for permanently erasing the electronic research data and securely shredding any hard copy research data. Access to study data is limited to those researchers on the study team, as well as the Queen's General Research Ethics Board (GREB) may request access to study data to ensure that the researcher(s) have or are meeting their ethical obligations in conducting this research. GREB is bound by confidentiality and will not disclose any personal information.

I plan to publish the results of this study in academic journals and present them at conferences. I will not include any personally identifying information from the interviews when presenting my findings. I will never include any real names with quotes. I will make every effort to ensure quotes do not identify participants. During the study, your child can let me know if they want me to share something they said or drew.

As a small token of appreciation, you/your child will receive a $25 e-gift card of your choice (Amazon or Visa) after agreeing to participate in each of the three interviews. If your child agrees to participate in all three interviews, you/your child will have received three gift certificates for a total of $75.

If you or your child have any questions about the research, please contact me at 18een@queensu.ca, or my research supervisor, Dr. Alana Butler, at 1-613-533-6000 ext. 75298 or by email at alana.butler@queensu.ca.

If you have any ethics concerns, please contact the General Research Ethics Board (GREB) at 1-844-535-2988 (Toll free in North America) or email chair.GREB@queensu.ca. Call 1-613-533-2988 if outside North America. If non-English speaking participants wish to contact the Chair for ethics concerns, translation assistance may be necessary, as the REB Chair communicates in English only.

While participants' confidentiality will be protected to the extent possible, there is a remote possibility that the identity of yourself and/or your child could be identified through participation in this study. This Letter of Information provides you with the details to help you and your child make an informed choice. All your and your child's questions should be answered to your satisfaction before you decide whether or not to participate in this research study. You have not waived any legal rights by consenting to participate in this study. Keep one copy of the Letter of Information for your records and return one copy to the Researcher, Emma Ewing-Nagy.

By signing below, I am verifying that: I have read the Letter of Information and all of my questions have been answered.

☐ Yes, you have my permission to interview my child and to use audio recording
☐ No, you do not have my permission to interview my child and to use audio recording
☐ Yes, you have my permission to use my child's quotations and drawings
☐ No, you do not have my permission to use my child's quotations and drawings

_____	_____	_____
Signature of Guardian	PRINTED NAME	Date
_____	_____	_____
Signature of Principal Investigator	PRINTED NAME	Date

Appendix B

Interview Protocol

Prior to the virtual interview sessions, a copy of the interview protocol will be sent to the students' legal guardians. Each time they receive a copy of the interview protocol, details about the drawing task will be included. This drawing task is to be completed before beginning each interview, as there will be questions discussing the students' drawing. Once the student has completed their drawing, parents/guardians will be asked to either email me a photograph or scanned copy of their child's drawing. Upon beginning the virtual interview session, student participants and their legal guardians will be welcomed, and the researcher will introduce themselves, share their personal and educational background, explain the purpose of the research being conducted, and explain the interview process. At this time, I will read through the LOI and collect consent. This will occur again before beginning each of the three interviews, as the interviews will occur 2 weeks apart. Student participants and their legal guardians will be asked if they are comfortable with having the interview audio recorded and will have the opportunity to ask any questions before starting. If the student participant wishes, their legal guardian may be present in the room with them. Student participants and their legal guardians will be reassured that their identities will remain confidential, and that information shared during the interviews will be used for research purposes only. Parental/guardian Assent and Child Assent will be conducted.

Preamble:

I have some questions about your experiences at school and what it was like to move to a new country. There are no right or wrong answers. I will not judge what you say. You can decide to stop the interview at any time.

Interview session one: Understanding the experience of newcomer students' adjustment to school in Canada

Drawing task: Can you draw a picture of what your school and classroom look like?

1. When did you move to Canada? How old were you when you moved to Canada?
2. Which country did you used to live in? Can you tell me what your old home was like?
3. What languages can you speak? What was your English (proficiency) like when you came to Canada?
4. Can you tell me about your family? Who is in your family? What things does your family like to do together?
5. Can you tell me what it was like to move to Canada? What do you remember about moving to Canada?
6. How did you feel about moving to Canada? Do you like living in Canada now?
7. How did you feel when you were about to go to your new school for the first time?
8. Can you tell me what your school is like? What are the students in your class like? What is your teacher like?

9. What do you do at school?
10. What do you like about school? What do you not like about school?
11. Can you tell me about your drawing? How did you decide what to draw?
12. How did you feel when you were drawing your picture?
13. Is there anything else you would like to tell me about?

Interview session two: Discussing student drawings to understand how newcomer children perceive school

Drawing task: Can you draw a picture of how you feel at school? Draw what makes you feel that way.

1. Can you tell me about your drawing?
2. How did you decide what to draw? How did you feel when you were drawing your picture? How does your picture make you feel when you look at it?
3. How do you feel in the morning when it is time to go to school?
4. How do you feel at the end of the day when it is time to go home?
5. What are some things you find hard or difficult about school?
6. What are some things you find easy or fun at school?
7. Do you think school is important? Do you think it is important to do a good job at school? Why or why not?
8. Can you tell me about the rules you have to follow at school and in your class?
9. When you are at school, are there people who help you when you need it? How do people help you?
10. Do you think your school/teacher/classmates did a good job of welcoming you to your new school? Why or why not? What are some things that made you feel welcomed?
11. Do you think your teacher and classmates know a lot about you? What things do you think they know about you?
12. What are some things that make you feel happy at school?
13. Can you tell me about a time when you felt proud of yourself at school because you did something good?
14. Is there anything else you would like to tell me about your school?

Interview session three: Understanding how newcomer children utilize sources of support and the strategies they use to integrate themselves into the school community

Drawing task: Can you draw a picture of your favourite thing about school?

1. Can you tell me about your drawing? How did you decide what to draw? How did you feel when you were drawing your picture?
2. Now that you have been at your new school for a little longer, how do you feel about your school?
3. What things about school make you feel happy?
4. What was it like to meet new people/make new friends at school? What was difficult? What helped?

5. When you are at school, what do you do if you need help? How do you feel when you have to ask for help?
6. What do you do when you are having a difficult time? What helps you feel better when something is difficult or challenging?
7. What are some things that you are really good at? What are some things that people really like about you?
8. What important things have happened to you in your life?
9. What do you like about your life?
10. Who are the important people in your life?
11. If you had a magic wand and could change something about school, what would you change?
12. What can teachers do to help students that have moved from another country?
13. What advice would you give to other kids who are about to start school in Canada?
14. What do you want to be when you grow up?
15. What do you want to happen in the future? What do you think you can do to make your dreams and goals come true?
16. Is there anything else you would like to tell me or talk about?

Appendix C

Ethical Clearance

February 15, 2022

Ms. Emma Ewing-Nagy
Queen's University

Title: "GEDCU-1085-21 Exploring the Experiences of Newcomer Children in School Through Counterstories: A Multiple Case Study;" TRAQ # 6035270

Dear Ms. Ewing-Nagy:

The General Research Ethics Board (GREB), by means of a delegated board review, has cleared your proposal entitled **" GEDCU-1085-21 Exploring the Experiences of Newcomer Children in School Through Counterstories: A Multiple Case Study "** for ethical compliance with the Tri-Council Guidelines (TCPS 2) and Queen's ethics policies. In accordance with the Tri-Council Guidelines (Article 6.14) and Standard Operating Procedures (405), your project has been cleared for one year.

You are reminded of your obligation to submit an annual renewal form prior to the annual renewal due date (access this form at http://www.queensu.ca/traq/signon.html/; click on "Events;" under "Create New Event" click on "General Research Ethics Board Annual Renewal/Closure Form for Cleared Studies"). Please note that when your research project is completed, you need to submit an Annual Renewal/Closure Form in Romeo/traq indicating that the project is 'completed' so that the file can be closed. This should be submitted at the time of completion; there is no need to wait until the annual renewal due date.

You are reminded of your obligation to advise the GREB of any adverse event(s) that occur during this one-year period (access this form at http://www.queensu.ca/traq/signon.html/; click on "Events;" under "Create New Event" click on "General Research Ethics Board Adverse Event Form"). An adverse event includes, but is not limited to, a complaint, a change or unexpected event that alters the level of risk for the researcher or participants or situation that requires a substantial change in approach to a participant(s). You are also advised that all adverse events must be reported to the GREB within 48 hours.

You are also reminded that all changes that might affect human participants must be cleared by the GREB. For example, you must report changes to the level of risk, applicant characteristics, and implementation of new procedures. To submit an amendment form, access the application by at http://www.queensu.ca/traq/signon.html; click on "Events;" under "Create New Event" click on "General Research Ethics Board Request for the Amendment of Approved Studies." Once submitted, these changes will automatically be sent to the Ethics Coordinator, GREB, at University Research Services for further review and clearance by GREB or the Chair, GREB.

On behalf of the General Research Ethics Board, I wish you continued success in your research.

Sincerely,

Professor Dean A. Tripp, PhD
Chair, General Research Ethics Board (GREB)
Departments of Psychology, Anesthesiology & Urology
Queen's University